

Wednesday, October 22, 1998

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crisis

Amid negotiating crisis, Arafat wishes Netanyahu happy birthday

WYE MILLS (AFP) — Amid a negotiating crisis in the Mideast peace talks, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat wished Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a happy 49th birthday Wednesday with flowers and a phone call. "I just delivered flowers to him from President Arafat," said Ahmad Tibi, an Israeli Arab aide to the Palestinian leader. "Chairman Arafat also talked by telephone with the prime minister and he told him he hoped they would achieve an agreement as soon as possible," he said.

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U.S. presents draft Mideast peace accord to avert summit breakdown

WYE MILLS (AFP) — Rushing to avert a breakdown in Mideast summit talks, the United States gave Israeli and Palestinian leaders Wednesday a full draft of its peace proposals for the first time and demanded "rough decisions" to seal an agreement.

"We will today share a text of what we hope will allow the two sides to put the peace process back on track," State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

The move came after Israeli officials said they were "preparing to leave" the seven-day-old negotiations because of a purported Palestinian refusal to provide sufficient security guarantees to accompany the land concessions called for in the U.S. package.

Israeli officials said around midday that they were packing for a planned 5:00 p.m. (2200 GMT) departure, although journalists accompanying the delegation had not been told to prepare.

One official also indicated the warning could be more a negotiating ploy than a serious threat. "Things could change every 15 minutes, but now we're preparing to leave," he said.

Responding to the threat, Rubin said: "We can't hold people here against their will... but we don't have information at this time that any relevant parties are leaving."

A senior aide to Arafat, Ahmad Tibi, called the Israeli move "blackmail."

"They are trying to push the sides into accepting only a partial accord" which would limit the land transfers and other extensions of Palestinian autonomy called for under the U.S. package deal, he told AFP.

"We totally reject any partial agreement," Tibi said.

The global U.S. package involves staged further Israeli pullbacks from the West Bank and implementation of a host of secondary steps required under interim peace accords in exchange for tougher Palestinian action against violent radicals.

The deal, which if accepted would lead to negotiations on a permanent peace settlement



This file photo, taken in 1996 at the White House, shows President Bill Clinton meeting with His Majesty King Hussein, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. King Hussein on Tuesday joined President Clinton at the Mideast summit as the talks between Israel and the Palestinians entered a 'hard bargaining' stage. Later in the day, the King flew his aircraft back to his residence in Washington (AP photo)

determining the size and political status of the Palestinian-controlled lands, has been the focus of fruitless negotiations for more than a year.

But Rubin said "the initiative has never been shared in full with both parties" but rather been dealt with in its "component parts."

"No subject will surprise either side, but whether they can agree on the wording is another matter," he said. "The devil is in the details."

Rubin stressed that the draft proposal would not be presented as a "take or leave it package" but would seek to focus the negotiations after a series of Israeli tantrums.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat accepted the U.S. package in principle several months ago, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has resisted its requirement for further troop withdrawals until the Palestinians agreed to a long list of

security demands.

The U.S. decision to put its compromise package on the table should prove the decisive step in determining the success or failure of the summit which began Thursday at a retreat in rural Maryland and has involved an extraordinary investment of time and energy by U.S. President Bill Clinton and his entire foreign policy team.

"We are at a critical moment," Rubin said, "and what the result of this will be is up to the leaders themselves. This is a roller coaster."

"Let me be very clear, despite the intensity of today and the intensity of yesterday, it is not at all clear that the tough decisions necessary to reach an agreement can or will be made," he said.

Clinton has spent 57 hours at the summit but was holding back on a decision to join the talks on the U.S. draft document Wednesday.

In his absence, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was running the mediation effort.

Earlier Israeli officials accused the Palestinians of refusing key elements of a security deal, notably on the arrest of people Israel accuses of involvement in terrorism, the collection of illegal weapons and a reduction in the size of the Palestinian police force to levels allowed under earlier accords.

"Terrorists are serving in the Palestinian police and they're not even willing to arrest and incarcerate them, not to mention extradition," one official said.

In a U.S.-brokered compromise which Israeli and Palestinian officials had said was reached earlier this week, Israel dropped a demand for extradition of accused terrorists, in exchange for a pledge that Palestinians would imprison the suspects under the supervision of the CIA.

Netanyahu's spokesman Aviv Bushinsky said another core dispute concerned Israel's demand that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat convene a meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, to formally cancel all anti-Israel clauses in the 1964 PLO covenant.

Arafat said the more than 600 members of the PNC already took the decision in a May 1996 meeting and has refused to reconvene the body, which includes many hardline opponents to peace negotiations with Israel.

Palestinian officials said the Americans had put forward a compromise formula calling for the PLO central council, which has around 120 members, to meet within two weeks of the start of the next West Bank withdrawal to ratify the May 1996 PNC decision, Israel was apparently rejecting the idea.

Jordan draws strength from the will of its people, Regent says

IRBID (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday said that Jordan draws strength from the will of its people and leadership and that it is capable of realising further achievements and progress.

"With God's grace we will always be strong and bear our responsibilities working as one team," the Regent said in an address at the inauguration of the Irbid Chamber of Commerce building.

"Jordanians are characterized by their noble nature and their morals are displayed by their sincere and honourable stands," the Crown Prince said. "Had our successes been not so great we would not have been exposed to a campaign of malice and envy." But a few cast doubts, he said.

"Jordan enjoys great will and determination. Let us hear about what is good and address injustices and stop belittling our achievements."

"We are not doing enough in expressing our achievements, and we have to say that the Kingdom possesses great potentials for which we are envious."

"Let us suppress our anger and shoulder our responsibilities and let us not listen to rumours but rather work to win God's blessing and manifest our national belonging and our capabilities," added the Regent.

He said that "His Majesty King Hussein expects us to live up to expectations."

adding that Jordanians ought to exert more efforts and overcome bureaucracy and routine and display seriousness in work.

"Strong will should manifest itself on the part of the various public and private sectors that should participate in the process of construction. Our stability, our cohesion and clear vision and serious work serve as the criteria in addressing domestic issues like poverty and unemployment as well as external issues."

The Regent said that all citizens are equal regardless of their origin and birth place, be it in the north, south, east or west.

He reiterated Jordan's call for achieving stability in the region based on Arab and Islamic integration adding that anyone speaking about the national dimension should realise that Jordan seeks clarity and transparency in its dealings with others including trade and economic relations.

Cooperation among the different private and public sectors and participation in decision-making are a must and should be based upon accurate scientific information.

Other speakers at the ceremony included Mohammad Shuba, the head of the Irbid Chamber of Commerce, Hani Sawaged, the director of the National Bank and Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammad Saleh Hourani.

The Irbid Chamber of Commerce complex is built on a

2,700-square-metre area with multipurpose halls complete with different utilities.

Also Wednesday Prince Hassan inaugurated the newly-restored and refurbished Great Irbid Mosque near the Chamber of Commerce Complex.

Built with funds donated by His Majesty King Hussein, the mosque occupies 3,000 square metres in area and can accommodate 850 worshippers.

In remarks after touring the mosque, Prince Hassan conveyed King Hussein's greetings to the Jordanian people and prayed to God for the King's safe return home.

He said that by joining the talks at Wye Plantation the King has displayed courage and resolve to help peace in the region.

It is hoped that the summit's success will mark a stage that will witness further international concern over the present circumstances of occupation and aggression on Arab people and will safeguard the dignity of the Arab Muslim and Christian people of Palestine.

Prince Hassan who met students learning the Koran at the mosque expressed hope that the young generation will pursue the struggle to enhance the image of the moderate Islamic faith.

The refurbished mosque was originally built by the late King Abdullah, founder of the Kingdom between 1939 and 1944.

King's participation in Wye summit a manifestation of Jordan's key role — Tarawneh

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein's participation in Wye Plantation meetings between the Palestinians and the Israelis upon the request of the U.S. has its political significance, indicating the importance of Jordan's role in the Middle East region, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh said Wednesday.

Speaking at a lunch attended by editors of newspapers and senior information officials, Tarawneh said the King's participation proves the Kingdom's reputation in handling different issues in a balanced manner.

The prime minister said the King's role in this respect is a source of pride for every Jordanian, Arab and Muslim citizen, adding that Jordan is committed to its principled pan-Arab stands.

Tarawneh reiterated King Hussein's key role in supporting the Palestinian people in regaining their legitimate rights and the establishment of their state on their national soil.

In reply to a question

about the King's health condition, he said the King is responding positively to the treatment.

He added that the King piloted his own plane from the Mayo Clinic to Washington where he takes his rest, stressing that the King's participation in the Wye Plantation summit was a major proof of his good condition.

According to Tarawneh, the King's treatment programme is going on according to plan and under the supervision of doctors who testify that he is responding very well to the treatment.

Discussing domestic issues, the prime minister said although Parliament is in recession until the beginning of December but he noted that his meetings with deputies and senators will continue.

Tarawneh said the government has finalised a mechanism for national dialogue which would be conducted through a ministerial committee that has drawn up plans for the dialogue with the different civic institutions.

In the coming month there will be an in-depth dialogue over the budget which will be discussed at all levels, he said.

The dialogue will also involve the military and will cover areas where these institutions can contribute to the development of defence resources, he said.

The prime minister said dialogue will continue and cover all aspects of life with the purpose of arriving at common ground solutions that will satisfy the public.

Answering a question on whether the government can take "daring measures" if warranted, Tarawneh said that that was difficult because once governments do so they are confronted with a fierce opposition. But he noted that he had secured the King's support for such decisions because

"we live in an exceptional stage due to internal and external circumstances but we have a solid base on which we can build and achieve further accomplishments."

Turkey: Deal signed with Syria on rebels

ANKARA (R) — Turkey declared on Wednesday it considered a crisis with Syria over Kurdish rebels to be over but warned it reserved the right to use armed force if Damascus failed to observe an agreement.

Newspapers portrayed a deal reached, according to Turkish officials, at secret talks late on Tuesday as a triumph for the vociferous headline campaign Ankara launched against Syria three weeks ago.

"Damascus Gives In," read a headline in the liberal Sabah newspaper. "Syria Bows," trumpeted the popular Miliyet daily of the dispute that some feared could escalate into a broader conflict between NATO member Turkey and the Arab World.

There was no immediate reaction from Damascus on the deal, negotiated in southern Turkey.

Turkey had threatened to use armed force against Syria if it failed to close down camps on Syrian soil which it said were being used by Turkish Kurd rebels. It also demanded that the man who has led the campaign for 14 years be handed over or expelled from Syria.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Necati Utkan told a briefing the deal, negotiated by security and political officials, appeared to meet Ankara's demands.

"This document should be considered as an agreement which ends the crisis and starts dialogue," he said. But he added a note of warning to Syria, which has maintained throughout the crisis that it has no links to the guerrilla Kurdish Labour Party (KPP) or its leader Abdullah "Apo" Ocalan.

"Syria extends its hand of friendship to us. If everything is realised in the framework of the agreement, we will shake this hand," he said.

"If we consider the worst scenario and think that this will not be realised, our military measures will be enforced at this stage," he added.

Several Arab countries, suspicious of an informal defence alliance between Turkey and Israel, see the hand of Israel in the crisis.

The agreement, in the form of signed minutes of the two-day Turkish-Syrian meeting, set out Syrian obligations clearly.

Jordanians jailed in Israel are in poor health, say families

AMMAN (AP) — The families of 14 Jordanian prisoners in Israel said on Wednesday the inmates are suffering serious health problems, and urged the government to intercede for their freedom.

Israel says the 14 Jordanians, jailed in the last 10 years are convicted of serious offences, such as fatal attacks on Israelis, and insists that they spend their prison terms in its territory while Jordan is seeking their handover to Jordanian custody.

In a joint statement, the prisoners' families said: "All the prisoners suffer from deteriorating psychological and health conditions as a result of their prolonged and unjustified detention and the poor living conditions they are living in."

For instance, Karmel Ajlouni, is suffering from advanced cancer of the liver, he said. Ajlouni, 24, is serving a life term for killing an Israeli soldier and injuring another in an ambush on the Israeli frontier in 1990.

The statement, made available to the Associated Press, urged the government to "continue its efforts to free the prisoners."

The statement was signed by 21 Jordanians who visited the prisoners in Israel's Ashkelon prison on Tuesday — the first such trip approved by Israel under a 1994 peace treaty with Jordan.

In the last four years, Israel has freed more than 20 Jordanian prisoners, involved in less serious offences such as infiltrating to Israel or affiliation with banned militant Islamist factions.

Hussein Mohammad Amin, the head of the IMD, said many of the UNSCOM inspectors — notably Britons and Americans — were spying for the foreign intelligence services of "hostile" states.

"This incident shows that a large number of inspectors are not working for the objective of implementing U.N. resolutions but for their [own] purposes, which are related to intelligence," Amin told reporters.

The inspectors' job is to verify that Iraq has destroyed its weapons of mass destruction so that international sanctions imposed for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait can be lifted.

Amin accused the inspectors of collecting information which could be used by "enemies to hurt Iraq any time they want."

"Yesterday an accident took place when a Chilean technician tried to use his own camera to photograph some sensitive equipment. He is not authorised to take such pictures... and when he was asked to give up the film and camera he accepted."

There are 40 U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq, divided into six teams for missile sites, chemical, nuclear and biological weapons-related sites, helicopter surveillance and export-import control.

They are backed by 40 support staff, as well as 40

Chilean air force personnel maintaining five helicopters.

Since Aug. 5, when Iraq suspended cooperation with the UNSCOM's disarmament teams, Baghdad has barred the U.N. monitors from adding any new sites to the hundreds they already observe. The U.N. Security Council has responded by freezing its periodic reviews of trade sanctions, keeping the embargo against Iraq in force indefinitely.

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Terrorism, criminality on agenda of Interpol's Cairo conference

CAIRO (AFP) — The international police organisation, Interpol, opens a six-day conference here Thursday aimed at fine-tuning ahead of the next millennium a new strategy to fight terrorism and organised crime.

"The two key topics which will be discussed are terrorism and organised crime," Interpol's Information Chief Serge Sabourin told AFP.

Efforts to crackdown on international pedophile rings and "the use of new communication technology [such as the Internet] for illicit behaviour" and last week's arrest in London of Chilean ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet, with the help of Interpol, will also be discussed here, he said.

Egypt, the first Arab and Middle Eastern country to host Interpol's general assembly, is calling for an international effort to fight terrorism and

restrain terrorist suspects' freedom of movement.

"Egypt will present at the Interpol conference a working paper calling for increased efforts to contain terrorism," Egyptian Interior Minister Habib Al Adly told a press conference in Cairo on Monday.

"An international effort is needed because a country alone cannot face these problems," he said.

Cairo would like to see a global agreement to restrict the movement of terrorist suspects from one country to another, to cut off their funds, prevent them from seeking haven abroad and secure their extraditions.

"Terrorists can move unchecked between countries and this helps them carry out their crimes, thus undermining the effectiveness of the international security ser-

vices," Adly said.

"Terrorism can only be eliminated through an international agreement and the sanctioning of countries that help and give shelter to terrorists," Adly had said on Sunday.

At its 66th general assembly held in New Delhi last year, Interpol urged the United Nations to adopt a universal extradition convention to strengthen the fight against terrorism and criminality.

Egyptian officials said meeting participants will discuss how to set up a data bank on terrorism and organised crime, and regional Interpol liaison offices.

Delegates will also talk about ways to counter drug trafficking, antiquities smuggling, contraband, money-laundering, fake passports and currency as well as rules for protecting intellectual property rights.



ELECTIONS IN IRAN: An Iranian woman in Tehran on Wednesday passes pictures of former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who is one of 167 candidates running for election to the Assembly of Experts, a body of clerics responsible for electing Iran's supreme leader. A total of 39 million Iranians will be eligible to take in October 23 polls (Reuters photo)

Trial linkage of Jordan, Egypt power grids complete

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Egypt have conducted a trial linkage of their national electricity grids with a 400-kilovolt underwater cable connecting Aqaba and Sinai.

Waddah Nabulsi, director general of the National Electric Power Company, said the two sides have completed the preparations for linking their grids and have exchanged electric power on an experimental basis. But he gave no date for full operations.

The Jordanian-Egyptian project is part of a larger plan that will also include the linkage of the power grids of Iraq, Syria and Turkey, according to Nabulsi, who said the grids of these countries will be later linked to European grids via Turkey.

According to Nabulsi, \$90 million supplied as a loan from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development has been spent on the project in Jordan.

He said the grid linkages will help these countries acquire low cost electric power and save money that would otherwise be spent on additional power stations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Greece says Turkey is a 'troublemaker'

ATHENS (AP) — Greece accused Turkey on Wednesday of being a "regional troublemaker," claiming Turkish fighter planes violated Greek airspace while Greek forces conducted war games. Ankara denied the claim, Turkey "constantly remains the regional troublemaker which in a provocative and aggressive way disrupts its relations with the European Union and Greece," government spokesman Dimitris Reppas said. According to the Greek Air Force, 26 Turkish fighter planes violated Greek national airspace on Tuesday, flying as close as two nautical miles from the eastern Aegean islands of Psara, Symi, Agios Efstratios and Karpathos.

'Sudan irrigation minister resigns'

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's irrigation minister, a leading member of the Ansar religious sect linked to the opposition Umma Party, has resigned, newspapers reported on Wednesday. They said President Omar Hassan al-Bashir had accepted the resignation of Irrigation and Water Resources Minister Sharif Al Tuhani. The Ansar sect provides the main power base for the Umma Party, headed by former Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi, overthrown in the 1989 military coup that brought Bashir to power.

Saddam in chemotherapy — Israeli TV

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy, Israel's privately-run second television channel said Tuesday. A reporter for the channel in Washington to carry the Wye River peace summit, citing "Arab and Western sources," said Israeli officials would pass on news of Saddam's illness to U.S. officials. Kuwait's Al Rai Al Aam newspaper reported Oct. 7 that French doctors in August found the 61-year-old Iraqi leader had a tumour in his intestinal tract and recommended he undergo a six-month programme of intensive chemotherapy.

Britain studying defence pact with Bahrain

MANAMA (R) — Britain is discussing the possibility of signing a defence agreement with Bahrain, British Defence Secretary George Robertson said in an interview published in a Bahraini newspaper on Wednesday. "I am very keen to maintain the excellent relationship between our armed forces, and we have been working with Bahrain for some time on agreeing a defence cooperation accord," Robertson told the Bahrain Tribune.

Denktash proposes non-aggression pact for Cyprus

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash has proposed a non-aggression pact for Cyprus as Greek and Greek Cypriot armed forces carried out joint military manoeuvres on the island on Wednesday.

"The two states could make a non-aggression agreement. This is the thing [to do]," Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency quoted Denktash as saying.

Greek military aircraft and naval vessels began six days of exercises on Tuesday. Around 10,000 Greek Cypriot troops and reservists were also to participate in the annual manoeuvres codenamed "Nikiforos 98."

Denktash accused Greece and Cyprus' internationally recognised Greek Cypriot government of staging the war games as a show of aggression. Turkey alone recognises

Denktash's breakaway Turkish Cypriot state.

"They constantly prove in such kind of acts they don't want peace, they don't want a deal with us," he said.

Denktash's comments came ahead of talks with U.N. Cyprus envoy Ann Hercus on Wednesday, the latest in a series of diplomats to attempt to end the long-running dispute over the island. Neither Denktash nor Hercus made

any comment after their one hour meeting.

Cyprus has been split into rival Turkish and Greek Cypriot zones since 1974 when mainland Turkish troops invaded the northern third of the island in response to a military coup backed by Athens.

Tensions rose on the island earlier in the year when Greek military aircraft landed at a Greek Cypriot airbase as part of a joint defence pact signed

between Greece and Cyprus in 1993.

The move prompted Turkey to send its own aircraft and naval vessels to the north of the island in a tit-for-tat gesture.

Turkey has threatened to destroy Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles which the Greek Cypriots plan to deploy on the island.

Greece has said such an attack would be a cause for war.

Qadhafi says British spies plotted to kill him

'Lockerbie trial could improve U.S.-Libyan ties

LONDON (R) — Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi said in an interview broadcast on Tuesday that he had evidence that British intelligence agents tried to kill him.

"Yes, yes it happened," he told BBC television. "Britain was behind this campaign of assassination. There is evidence and when the time comes we will bring this evidence forward," Qadhafi said.

Claims about a British plot to kill the Libyan leader by attacking him with a hand grenade in 1996 were first made by a renegade former member of the MI5 intelligence service, David Shayler.

Britain has denied any attempt to assassinate Qadhafi.

Shayler, currently in prison in Paris, is due in court on Wednesday when an application for his extradition to Britain for breaching the Official Secrets Act will be heard.

In his interview, the Libyan leader also expressed willingness to resolve the conflict over how and where to try the two Libyans accused of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing.

He said the pair were now "very happy" to face trial in the Netherlands, instead of in Scotland or the United States.

"They may be guilty or

not guilty. That is the job of the courts to decide. If they are guilty, it is because there is revenge between individual Libyans and America."

"We can solve this problem very easily. Then the families of the victims will be satisfied and get rid of this anxious problem." Qadhafi said the trial could mark an improvement in relations with the United States.

"When peace comes between the two countries, they will shake hands and there will be peace between the two respective countries. After that such acts will automatically come to an end," he said.

U.N. accuses Saddam's son of systematic human rights abuses

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The Iraqi government continues to practise systematic violations of human rights, including illegal amputations ordered by a son of President Saddam Hussein, a U.N. report said Wednesday.

The report by U.N. special rapporteur for human rights Max van der Stoep concluded that since last year in Iraq "there has been no change whatsoever in the politico-legal order which is the cause of systematic violations of human rights of all kinds."

He singled out a reported case of the unilateral reimposition by Saddam's son Uday of amputations, after the government refused to take the punishment off the statute books.

Van der Stoep said that according to his information, in an Aug. 7 letter, Uday

ordered the amputation of the hands of six members of an elite commando unit who used their position to rob people.

An army deserter was also reportedly punished in connection with the same case.

Van der Stoep said that the incident demonstrated that amputations were used as a punishment in Iraq without due legal process.

The incident also showed that "there is effectively no rule of law in Iraq insofar as Uday holds no judicial or similar competence and is merely the publisher of a daily newspaper and the head of the Iraqi Olympic Committee."

Van der Stoep also reiterated concern about the assassination of two Shia Muslim leaders in April and June, which "constitutes systematic oppression in the form of an intended

terror." He said the killings, along with prison executions of 62 persons in June 1998, showed the Iraqi government's intention "to punish all those who were in any way implicated in the uprisings of 1991."

The prisoners executed at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison were charged with taking part in "mob incidents" in March 1991, when Shia Muslims from southern Iraq staged an uprising, along with the Kurds of northern Iraq, following the end of the Gulf war.

The report also criticised Iraq for implementing in a "discriminatory and not fully equitable or efficient manner" an oil-for-food programme which is an exemption to the U.N. sanctions regime against Iraq.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

15:10Cartoon — Superman
15:30Drama — Sliders
16:00Doc — Life on the Digital Edge
17:00French Programme
18:15Sliders — Sparks (Ep3)
19:00Le Journal
19:15Science Magazine — L'oeuf De Colomb
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — Family Manors
20:00The Great Romances
20:30Drama — Dr. Quinn the Medicine Woman
21:10Oprah Winfrey
22:00News in English
22:30Feature film — "True Crime"
23:59Comedy — The Boys
00:30End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

15:10Swiss Family Robinson
15:30Treasure Hunt
16:00French film
18:15The Simpsons
19:00Le Journal
19:15French Programme — Allo La Terre
19:30News Headlines
19:35Comedy — The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00Cinema, Cinema
20:30Babylon-5
21:10Doc — Every Man
22:00News in English
22:30The X Files
23:59The Halifax
23:59End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:22Fajr
05:40(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:20Dhuhr

14:31'Asr
17:01Maghreb
18:18Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.
4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4634757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Moderate to relative warm weather conditions will prevail during the weekend and winds northeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be relatively hot, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman14/29
Aqaba21/32
Deserts13/29
Jordan Valley21/34

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 29, Aqaba 32
Humidity readings: Amman
30 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun23
Jerash29
Um Qays29
Madaba28
Petra28
Dead Seas34

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Munther Al Khafji5160868

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Dr. Wissam Hanyin4748563
Dr. Munther Al Khafji4779959
Dr. Mukhlis Mazahrah5153112
Firas pharmacy5661912
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asena pharmacy4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy4623672
Al Salam pharmacy4636730
Yacoub pharmacy4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy4637660
Najib pharmacy5347632

IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Salih(02) 246858

Al Quds pharmacy(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Saffarini(09) 987565

Khalifeh pharmacy(09) 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4617101
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111

Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdali56661317
Hussein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity46422816
Akileh Maternity46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4771013
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modera Hospital(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

(02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Speciality Hospital(02) 7101898, (02) 7101100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (53200) or 44 (53250).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:35Sanaa (RJ)
08:45New Delhi (RJ)
09:00Bombay (RJ)
09:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:25Beirut (RJ)
09:40Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:40Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
10:00Colombo (RJ)
14:45Beirut (add) (RJ)
14:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:30London (RJ)
16:50Milan, Aqaba (add) (RJ)
17:45Kuwait (RJ)
18:10Athens (RJ)
18:25Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

19:15 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
22:00Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
22:55Larnaca (RJ)

Other Flights

07:55Dubai (EK)
10:00Kuwait (KU)
12:00Riyadh (SV)
13:10 Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
14:10Sharjah (AH)
14:40Doha (QR)
17:40Beirut (ME)
18:00Paris (AF)
19:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:00Cairo (MS)
20:10London (BA)
22:20Istanbul (TK)
22:35Larnaca (CY)
23:05Moscow (SU)
00:15Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
03:20Tunis (TU)
04:20Antalia (TK)

Royal Wings (RW)

(For Thursday and Friday)
09:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
17:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport on Thursday and Friday) (RW)
19:20Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA on Friday only) (RW)
21:35 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA on Thursday only) (RW)
22:25 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45Beirut (RJ)
09:00Aqaba, Beirut (add) (RJ)

11:10Al 'Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:15Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:20Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)

11:45Kuwait (KU)
12:10Paris (RJ)
12:20Athens (RJ)
12:25London (RJ)
19:35Larnaca (RJ)
19:45Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
20:15Cairo (RJ)
20:25Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

05:15Istanbul (TK)
06:50Frankfurt (LH)
07:20London (BA)
08:55Dubai (EK)
08:55Damascus, Dubai (RJ)
11:00Kuwait (KU)
13:30Riyadh (SV)
14:00Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:00Annabab, Algiers (AH)
15:30Doha (QR)
19:00Beirut (ME)
20:10Tel Aviv (LY)
21:00Cairo (MS)
00:30Moscow (SU)
01:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:20Beirut, Tunis (TU)

Royal Wings

(For Thursday and Friday)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport on Thursday and Friday) (RW)
19:45 Tel Aviv (from QAIA on Thursday only) (RW)
20:20 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Korean talks start after 7-month break

GENEVA (AFP) — South and North Korea began talks Wednesday aimed at establishing permanent peace on the Korean peninsula amid concerns that the issue of U.S. troop withdrawal would again hurt negotiations.

As expected, North Korea demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops in South Korea and also called for a peace agreement between Washington and Pyongyang, a South Korean official here said.

He made the remarks after delegates of South and North Korea, the United States and China ended Wednesday's morning session for lunch.

A spokesman for the U.S. delegation said the morning session was "productive and straightforward."

"It was useful to review the positions (of each side)," he said.

The peace talks are aimed at replacing an armistice that technically ended the 1950-53 Korean war with a permanent peace mechanism.

South Korea's chief delegate, Park Kun-Woo, said in opening remarks that Seoul hoped to "adopt an agreement among the four

parties on specific aspects of composition and operation of the subcommittees."

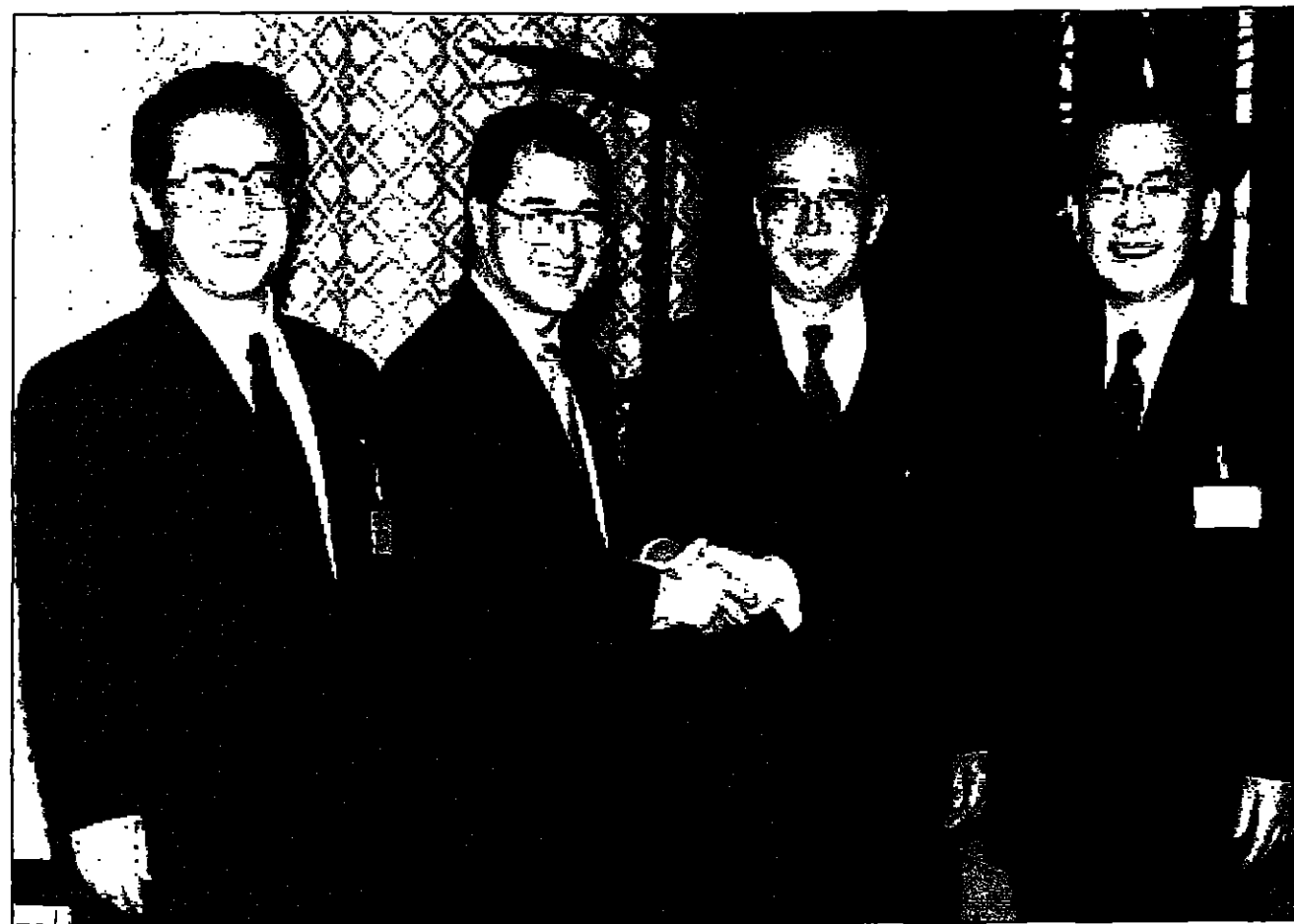
South Korea and the United States are hoping the North Koreans will agree to the establishment of two subcommittees — one on a peace regime and the other on reduction of tension.

"Setting up two committees likewise will allow us to conduct simultaneous discussion on the establishment of peace regime and tension reductions," Park said.

He said it was also important that South and North Korea discuss military confidence-building measures, since "mutual distrust resulting in hostile confrontation" resulted in escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula.

"Therefore, on the Korean peninsula where tension persisted for more than half a century in mutual distrust and confrontation, fostering military confidence between the parties directly concerned is crucial in order to make smooth progress in building a peace regime," Park said.

Park said among some of the ways to reduce tension was the "installation and



North Korean Vice Minister Kim Gye Gwan, U.S. Ambassador and States Department's envoy for Korea Charles Karmann, Chinese Ambassador Qian Qunqian and South Korean ambassador Park Kun-Woo (from L to R) smile as they pose for photographers in Geneva. A fresh round of talks to try to end a stalemate in the Korean peace process opened Wednesday as the South Korean chairman said he would work hard to make progress in the interests of regional stability (Reuters photo)

operation of hotline between military authorities."

The substance of the other delegates' opening remarks was not immediately known.

But Li Gun, the spokesman for the North Korean delegation, told AFP before the start of the talks that Pyongyang would bring up the issue of a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea.

"As we have said many times, U.S. troops must be withdrawn for there to be any progress in the talks," said Li.

Wednesday's meetings are being held one week before more than 85,000 U.S. and South Korean troops are to hold the biggest war games in six years.

Pyeongyang has slammed the joint annual Foal-Eagle exercises, aimed at prepar-

ing troops, including the 37,000 U.S. soldiers in South Korea, to meet a potential attack by North Korea.

Calling it a "rehearsal" for an all-out war, North Korea said the war games were a sign the United States was not serious about the peace talks, which it called "a smoke-screen."

The last round of talks, held in March, also broke

down after North Korea insisted the U.S. troop withdrawal issue be discussed as the main agenda during the talks.

North Korea insist on a separate peace agreement with the United States, the prime component of the United Nations forces which defended South Korea against an attack by the North in 1950.

The conflict ended in an uneasy armistice in 1953.

NEWS IN BRIEF

France won't recognise euros with Pope on them; EU to rule

PARIS (AP) — France is refusing to recognise euro coins the Vatican is stamping with Pope John Paul II on them, on the grounds of separation between church and state, a French newspaper reported Wednesday. The coins, with the face of the pope surrounded by stars representing the European Union, will be accepted throughout Italy when the single currency replaces 11 European moneys in 2002, the leftist daily Liberation said. But France won't accept the coins because of "the republican idea Paris has about currency," Liberation said. The tiny principality of Monaco, which lies inside France on the Mediterranean, will stamp its own coins but they won't necessarily be recognised outside its borders, the newspaper said. The dispute erupted during an EU monetary committee meeting last week and is to be arbitrated by EU finance ministers on Nov. 23, Liberation said. The French finance ministry had no immediate comment on the report.

U.N. envoy visits troubled East Timor

DILI, Indonesia (AP) — An envoy of the United Nations arrived Wednesday in disputed East Timor for talks with government officials and prominent opposition figures, including Nobel laureate Bishop Carlos Belo. Samuel Tamarit, an Ecuadorean diplomat, met first with Gov. Abilio Jose Soares to discuss ways of bringing peace to the former Portuguese colony. Indonesia invaded in 1975 and has been trying to quell separatist guerrillas ever since. Espedito Ximenes, a spokesman for Soares, said Tamarit's visit was prompted by media reports that Indonesian troops have stepped up operations against rebels in the half-island territory. "These reports were not true, they were baseless," Ximenes quoted Soares as telling the U.N. envoy. Indonesia recently withdrew 1,000 troops from East Timor in a highly publicised event designed to show it was serious about peace in the territory. President B.J. Habibie has eased his hold on East Timor since the resignation of his authoritarian predecessor, Suharto. Indonesia annexed East Timor in 1976. The United Nations, however, does not recognise Indonesian rule, and still considers Portugal the administrative power. The United Nations is sponsoring peace talks between Portugal and Indonesia, while President Habibie has offered autonomy to the territory in exchange for recognition of Indonesia's sovereignty.

French Polynesians jailed over anti-nuclear riots

PAPEETE, French Polynesia (R) — A court in Tahiti Tuesday jailed two separatists and gave suspended terms to 58 other people involved in riots over the resumption of nuclear tests in French Polynesia in 1995. Hiro Tefarere, regarded as the ringleader, was jailed for 18 months with another 18 months suspended and deprived of his civil rights for five years at the end of a month-long trial. Former trade union leader Ronald Terorotua was jailed for a year and deprived of his rights for three years. Rioters went on a 30-hour rampage in Papeete, on the island of Tahiti, after the first of six blasts which broke a French moratorium on nuclear testing. They fire-bombed the airport and other buildings and looted shops in violence which left 14 people injured. Twenty-one rioters were jailed for four months each in the wake of the rampage. Faced with a storm of international protest, France ended its test series ahead of schedule in January 1996 and has since signed a global ban on nuclear testing. Tefarere said he would appeal against the sentence which will deprive him of his seat in the French territory's elected assembly. "I am now a politician and I cannot let the state treat my people like this," he told reporters.

Former East Berlin commander fails to show for wall deaths trial

BERLIN (AP) — A former East German border patrol commander charged with the deaths of four people trying to escape across the Berlin wall failed to appear in court Wednesday and was believed to have left the country. The court-appointed lawyer for Walter Schulze, 51, said she had not been able to speak with him. He ran a restaurant in Fuerstenwalde, outside Berlin, until last year, when he disappeared. Police say he notified the post office to forward his mail to an address in Spain, but there were also rumours that he was living in Russia. The court reserved decision on whether to issue an arrest warrant. Schulze and a co-defendant, Reinhard Gentsch, are charged with four counts of manslaughter stemming from four deaths, including the February 1989 shooting of Chris Gueffroy, the last person killed trying to flee over the Berlin wall. Prosecutors say they were involved in drawing up and issuing basic orders for guards at the Berlin wall between 1985 and 1989, when it fell. The trial against Gentsch, 45, began as scheduled.

Geneva police arrest 24 in swoop on drug dealers

GENEVA (R) — Geneva police said Wednesday they had arrested 24 men, mainly African asylum-seekers, in a swoop aimed at breaking up a network of cocaine dealers in the affluent Swiss city. In a statement, the police said a total of 58 people had been rounded up in the operation near the main train station late Tuesday, but only 24 were detained. One policeman was slightly injured and a small quantity of cocaine was seized. Twenty-two of the detainees are African, including 19 asylum-seekers from Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Gambia, Somalia and Mauritania. "This operation aimed to strike at the nest of drug dealers, mainly of cocaine, dominated by Africans in Geneva for the past few years," police spokesman Eric Grandjean told Reuters. An investigating magistrate has 24 hours to lay charges.

Indian army uncovers massive explosives dump in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Indian troops in Kashmir have uncovered nearly 800 kilograms of explosives suspected to belong to Muslim separatist guerrillas and meant for civilian targets, a defence spokesman said Wednesday. The haul included 500 kg of plastic RDX explosive. Defence sources said Muslim militants, waging a bloody campaign against Indian rule in divided Kashmir, were planning to use them on "government buildings and against top officials." A spokesman said rebels fired on soldiers when they approached the dump Tuesday for a routine search. The troops retaliated, forcing the guerrillas to flee. The explosives had been buried in the Tangmarg woods 40 kilometres north of the Kashmiri summer capital Srinagar. It was the largest cache of explosives ever uncovered in Kashmir, the spokesman said, adding that the army had been acting on a tip-off. Muslim separatists launched an armed secessionist campaign in Kashmir in 1989 that has claimed more than 20,000 lives.

Scientists use neutron beams on brain tumours

LONDON (R) — British scientists are working on a radical new treatment for brain cancer that destroys the cancerous cells with neutron beams, they said Wednesday.

Boron neutron capture therapy (BNCT) is already being tested on patients in the United States but it is only available at nuclear reactor sites where the beams can be safely generated.

British scientists are testing new compounds and are planning to set up the world's first non-reactor BNCT site so cancer patients can be treated in clinics.

"What we're creating here is a unique type of cancer treatment," Professor Derek Beynon, of the University of Birmingham, said in a statement.

"We are building on technology which has already been tried and tested — but we hope our more sophisticated approach will help make this treatment a reality for brain patients in the UK."

Brain tumours are one of the most difficult cancers to treat and survival rates are very poor. The research is being carried out on malignant gliomas, the most common brain cancer, which is resistant to standard cancer treatments.

BNCT uses neutron beams from a nuclear reactor to destroy cancerous cells while leaving healthy cells alone. Patients are injected with a boron compound that accumulates in the brain tumour. A

beam of low energy neutrons are fired at the tumour where they react with the compound to produce cancer-killing nuclear particles.

Dr. Gerard Morris, of the University of Oxford, is trying to improve the targeting compound to make the treatment more effective.

"Once we have optimised the dose of the compound and our colleagues in Birmingham have perfected the strength of the beam we could be looking at treating patients in one hit rather than a long course of radiation," Morris said.

The new treatment would be less traumatic and have fewer side effects. If all goes well, the British scientists said trials could start within two years.

"An international chase is now on to make this new approach to BNCT available for brain cancer patients and this current research is helping to put the UK in pole position," said Gordon McVie, the head of the Cancer Research Campaign which is funding the research.

In addition to the U.S. trials on BNCT, European scientists are planning to test the technique on 40 patients in Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The first phase of the trial to determine the optimum level of irradiation is expected to last three years. It is being conducted by the European Organisation for Research and Treatment of Cancer.

Blair stands firm over Pinochet as Chile ups pressure

LONDON (AFP) — British Premier Tony Blair insisted Wednesday that his government would not interfere in legal action against Augusto Pinochet, as Chile mounted renewed pressure for the former dictator's release.

As the diplomatic row over Pinochet's arrest rumbled on, Blair said in an interview in London with several European newspapers that the legal process would be allowed to run its course.

He said the arrest was not a government decision but was a matter for the judicial systems of Britain and Spain.

The rules would apply no matter who was involved, Blair added, saying that when Home Secretary Jack Straw made a ruling on any extradition, it would be as a judge looking at the facts and not as a politician.

Meanwhile Chilean government envoy Santiago Benadava and its ambassador to London, Mario Ariza, met senior Foreign Office director Peter Westmacott to press for Pinochet's release.

However the Foreign Office stuck to its earlier stated line.

"Peter Westmacott repeated that Senator Pinochet's diplomatic passport did not confer diplomatic immunity on him, and that the case against Senator Pinochet had been judged on the law alone," a spokesman said.

It was the same message given to Ariza when he met Westmacott Monday and delivered an official protest from his government.

Pinochet, 82, was arrested Friday at a private London clinic on a request by two Spanish judges who want to question him over allegations of genocide and torture during his 1973-1990 dictatorship.

Chile insists Pinochet has immunity as he was travelling on a diplomatic passport as a life senator, but Britain says immunity does not apply in this case.

Separately, pressure grew from human rights and Chilean exiles' groups to bring Pinochet to court here if the Spanish court action falls through.

A human rights group of British deputies Wednesday backed calls for him to be investigated with a view to prosecution in this country.

Ann Clwyd, who chairs the group, wrote to the attorney general saying she hoped Pinochet would be extradited, but if that failed, British authorities should consider prosecuting him.

"We should seize this chance to bring to justice one of the most evil dictators alive," Clwyd said.

Tuesday, human rights pressure group Amnesty International said it had written to police calling for an urgent inquiry.

It argued that a case could be made in Britain under a 1988 law allowing prosecution for torture even if it took place in another country.

Police confirmed Wednesday that they had received a letter from Amnesty, but refused to discuss its contents.

However a spokesman said that "if a complaint had been received, we would be duty-bound to investigate, especially a complaint of

this nature."

A Chilean exiles' group is also considering whether to launch a private prosecution.

For now Pinochet remains under guard in hospital, where he is recovering after a back operation.

Spain has 40 days from his arrest to request his extradition, which would have to be approved by its government.

According to a document sent to London by the lead judge investigating Pinochet, victims of his regime were not only Chilean citizens, but people from Spain, Argentina, the United States and Britain.

Judge Baltasar Garzon lists 94 people of various nationalities who were victims of genocide, terrorism and torture during his dictatorship.

He accuses Pinochet of breaching several international accords, including the 1948 U.N. convention on genocide, saying that under such charges, Pinochet has no recourse to diplomatic immunity and cannot seek political asylum.

Trio to retrace Scott's fatal footsteps to South Pole

MELBOURNE, Australia (AFP) — A trio of adventurers will retrace the footsteps of polar explorer Robert Scott 87 years after his historic and fatal expedition to the South Pole and back.

Eric Phillips, Peter Hillary and Jon Muir will ski or ski-sail across 2,804 kilometres of the most inhospitable and remote terrain on Earth.

Organisers said it was the first trek of its kind in which adventurers would follow exactly in the steps of the 1910-1912 expedition.

The team leaves for Scott Base in Antarctica on Oct. 26, with the aim of reaching the Pole on Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

Scott and his team of four arrived at the South Pole on Jan. 17, 1912, only to find Norwegian

explorer Roald Amundsen had been there weeks before.

On the return journey they were hampered by illness and heavy blizzards, eventually dying of hunger and cold just 18 kilometres from a supply depot.

One team member, Lawrence Oates, worried his lameness, caused by frostbite, might further delay the already struggling expedition, walked out of his tent into the blizzard to die. His gallantry failed to save the others.

Phillips, Hillary and Muir admit their journey will be easier. For a start, they will have a mobile satellite phone to keep in touch with the world, and specially designed sleds that are lighter, stronger and more flexible than the usual fibre-

glass sleds.

Special steerable kites, attached to the sled to harness wind will also ease their journey.

But like the Scott expedition, the men will "manhaul" their gear — there will be no dogs on the trek with each man personally towing 150 kilograms of food, fuel and equipment.

And there will be no outside help, such as helicopter food drops, that have occurred on recent expeditions.

Hillary, whose father Sir Edmund was the first man to climb Mount Everest in 1953, said Antarctica was the "heart and lungs of the planet" and the expedition would help promote environmental awareness about the region.

He said the ability to communicate with the

outside world would have its own challenges, particularly if the team was "physically and psychologically shattered."

"We will feel serious fear, will feel terrible boredom but also incredible elation by this journey. It's part of the experience," he told a news conference Wednesday.

Muir, whose wife Brigitte recently became the first woman to conquer Everest, described himself as a man of action rather than words, and said he was looking forward to seeing how he would cope with the mobile phone.

"One of the things that I enjoy about expeditions is the solitude," he said. "I've spent months without talking to anyone and without any communication systems. It's a real inward journey," he said.

Popular Dutch poet Vasalis is dead at 89

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — Dutch poet Vasalis, whose lucid style and poignant commentary on everyday life made her one of the Netherlands' most popular poets, has died. She was 89.

Vasalis, whose real name was Margaretha Droggheleer Fortuyn-Leenmans, died Oct. 16 in her hometown of Roden in the northern Netherlands, a spokeswoman for her publisher Van Oorschot said Wednesday.

The cause of death was not disclosed, said spokeswoman Garma Niekens. Vasalis' work comprises about 100 poems depicting the endeavours and emotions of everyday life such as pain, grief, love and death. Among her books are "Parks and Deserts," published

in 1940, and "The Bird Phoenix" in 1947.

"Her poems are not very difficult to understand. She didn't use difficult words," Niekens said.

"That direct, that instant understanding and poignancy is a quality of Vasalis' verses which characterise most of the poems in her three collections," the daily De Volkskrant wrote in a tribute.

Some of her poems also have been translated into English and published in literary magazines. In 1982, she won the P.C. Hooft Prize, the Netherlands' top literary award. She was buried Tuesday in Amstelveen, a town just outside Amsterdam. Family details were not released.



Italy's new Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema (right) is congratulated by Justice Minister Oliviero Diliberto (left) of the Marxist Party of Italian Communist, which split from the hardline Communist Refoundation party, as Agriculture Minister Paolo De Castro looks on, during a sworn ceremony at Quirinale palace in Rome (Reuters photo)

New Italian premier, government sworn in

ROME (AP) — Italy's 56th government since World War II took office Wednesday with the swearing in of new Premier Massimo D'Alema and a centre-left government which includes the first Communist Cabinet ministers in half a century.

D'Alema himself is an ex-Communist and many political observers here say his rise to the post of premier signals an end to Italy's long "cold war" a decades-long battle to keep the left out of power.

The beginning of the end of that war was the collapse of the Christian Democrats, one of Europe's more conservative parties, amid the corruption scandals of the 1980s. The Christian Democrats had held power for decades, keeping the left at bay.

D'Alema's predecessor, Romano Prodi, presided over a centre-left government, the first of the post-war era. But Prodi himself was not a leftist.

The 49-year-old D'Alema, in contrast, came up through the ranks of the

old Italian Communist Party before becoming a social democrat after the fall of the Berlin wall.

Like Prodi, D'Alema hammered together a coalition drawing on the centre and the left, but he reached further in both directions than Prodi.

In assembling his majority, D'Alema courted a centrist party headed by a former Christian Democratic president, Francesco Cossiga. He also won the support of the new Italian Communist Party.

The new government has two ministers from the Italian Communists. Oliviero Diliberto is justice minister, the same post held half a century ago by Palmiro Togliatti, who led the old Italian Communist Party. Katia Beillo is the minister of regional affairs.

Justice is an especially sensitive ministry because of ongoing corruption investigations by the judiciary into the leader of the conservative opposition, media mogul and ex-premier Silvio Berlusconi.

Berlusconi has long maintained that the charges against him are politically motivated and a justice minister from the far left, his ideological nemesis, will only intensify his complaints.

D'Alema's alliance with Cossiga also raised eyebrows because of the long enmity between the left and the Christian Democrats.

Cossiga's new centrist party got three posts in the new government: the defence, and post and telecommunications ministries and a new portfolio called parliamentary relations.

The new government, which D'Alema announced early Wednesday, also includes eight holdovers from the Prodi government.

The highly respected Carlo Azeglio Ciampi stays on as treasury and budget minister and Vincenzo Visco continues as finance minister. The two are key figures in pushing through a 1999 budget meeting Italy's economic commitments to the European Monetary Union.

Another respected figure, Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini, also stays on.

D'Alema named a special minister, ex-Premier Giuliano Amato, to push through reforms in Italy's electoral system, which is blamed for the country's "revolving door" governments.

The new Cabinet has 25 ministers, four more than that of Prodi, and six women, twice the number in Prodi's government.

Two ministers are from the Green Party and D'Alema's own Democratic Left, which was the largest party in Prodi's coalition, got seven posts.

Among them is labour, which went to Naples' high-profile mayor, Antonio Bassolino.

Prodi's centre-left government fell on Oct. 9 when a hard-line Communist withdrew their support in a dispute over the budget. Parliament is expected to take a required vote of confidence on the new government Friday.

Yugoslavia 'meeting Kosovo demands despite attacks'

BELGRADE (AFP) — Yugoslavia insisted Wednesday that it was trying to satisfy Western demands for troop withdrawals from Kosovo despite what it called "armed provocations" by rebel guerrillas in the Serbian province.

The angry remarks from Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic came during talks with NATO's supreme commander in Europe U.S. General Wesley Clark that finished in the early hours of Wednesday.

As Milosevic defended his position in Kosovo, U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated the troop withdrawal with Belgrade, warned that Serbia still risked airstrikes if it did not comply with Western demands.

Under threat of NATO air strikes, Belgrade has been given until Oct. 27 to reduce the level of its security forces down to those before the conflict erupted in the ethnic Albanian-majority province in March. Belgrade must also create conditions for the return of the estimated quarter of a million people displaced by the fighting, and sit down for talks on the future status of the province, whose autonomy was annulled in 1989.

The talks with Clark concerned NATO verification of military activity in Kosovo using non-combat NATO surveillance aircraft.

However, the withdrawals have been complicated by a series of attacks on Serb police blamed by Belgrade on ethnic Albanian rebels and the lack of any significant international presence in the province.

Under the deal struck by Holbrooke last week, a 2,000-strong observer mission under the aegis of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe is supposed to verify the withdrawal of Serb forces.

However, just a handful of observers are currently in Kosovo and are not expected to be fully deployed before a month has elapsed.

In a statement from his office, Milosevic said: "Despite the armed provocations by terrorist groups ... Serbia and Yugoslavia remain firmly attached to the peaceful solution of the Kosovo problems by political means."

Belgrade says that five policemen have been killed in recent days in attacks it says were carried out by members of the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) which is fighting for Kosovo independence.

The KLA have denied it is behind the attacks and in a statement released to Albanian-language media in the province said Belgrade had failed to comply with international demands over Kosovo.

"Belgrade has not withdrawn military, police and paramilitary forces from Kosovo. Conditions are not created for the return of displaced and refugees. Detained and kidnapped persons have not been released," the KLA statement said.

In an interview given Tuesday to the Los Angeles Times news syndication service, Holbrooke said Milosevic's non-compliance with last week's accord could lead to military action "by next week."

Holbrooke warned that an order authorising the use of force by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was still in effect.

"As I speak to you today (Tuesday), Milosevic is not in compliance with the Kosovo accord," he said.

"Compliance means compliance," he told the news service. "Milosevic can't move some troops out and other troops in — that is not compliance."

"And if there is no compliance, he must know that the NATO activation order remains in effect and we could end up with military action by next week," Holbrooke said.

However, Holbrooke said he recognised that the independence-seeking KLA might try to sabotage the accord.

The refusal of Belgrade to recognise ethnic Albanian rights in Kosovo "has created a very strong and legitimately angry Albanian opposition, which includes people who have taken up arms."

"The general cease-fire is in everyone's interest, but it takes two sides to make it work," he said. "If the KLA doesn't understand this, they are mistaken."

In Washington Tuesday, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said that Belgrade had taken steps towards compliance and noted that some 30,000 refugees had left Kosovo's mountains and forests and found shelter.

"Clearly, there has been, by some standards, major compliance already. But there is not been complete compliance, and that's the problem," Bacon said.

Kosovo's hard realities mock OSCE verifiers

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — The 2,000 unarmed international "verifiers" being deployed in Kosovo's battle zones face an almost impossible task, a Western diplomat said Wednesday.

"We tried something very like this in Bosnia and it didn't work," said the diplomat, who asked not to be named.

"The notion you can send non-combatants in to sort out a war where the parties want to keep fighting is pretty well discredited, but that's where we are."

The verifiers are being despatched to Kosovo by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to damp fires of resentment and rebellion in Serbia's southern province with its huge ethnic Albanian majority.

The job was deemed too dangerous for regular NATO troops, so active duty and retired military officers from North America, Europe and the CIS, outfitted in civilian clothes and without weapons or armoured vehicles, are being sent instead.

The U.N. deployed lightly armed peacekeepers and unarmed civilian monitors in Bosnia during the 1992-5 war there.

That effort failed, comprehensively, to establish peace or protect civilians. Many massacres later, NATO moved in, where it remains today.

OSCE verifiers in Kosovo will be working among ragged refugees and combatants in a war zone where most of the action takes place after dark.

"The nature of the mission is that we're here to verify peace, not to enforce it," said Peter Erben, Chief of Staff and Operations for the OSCE in Bosnia, who arrived in Kosovo this week to help establish the mission here.

"We're not armed and we're probably not going to have armoured vehicles. So we're not equipped to make an intervention or stand between the parties. The presumption going in was that peace was in place."

The OSCE is arriving to verify the withdrawal of Yugoslav army and Serbian police units from Kosovo, and to build confidence among some 250,000 ethnic Albanian refugees so that they can return to their homes.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic agreed the OSCE mission with U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke ten days ago to avert NATO air strikes.

The deal allows NATO to conduct aerial surveillance over Kosovo even as OSCE ground verification teams arrive.

Already being dubbed 'the wing and the prayer option', this dual verification scheme is seen by critics as the latest climb-down by the West in the Balkans, a cosmetic scheme that got NATO off the bombing hook at little cost to Milosevic.

The critics say the United States has been gathering spy satellite information about the military situation in Kosovo for months, so the aerial surveillance by NATO planes is supplemental at best and redundant at worst.

About 50 diplomatic monitors were on the ground here over the summer reporting on an offensive by police and army units that targeted ethnic Albanian guerrillas and civilians alike.

Yugoslav compliance with international demands, not verification, has been the real issue in Kosovo since June.

Some police and army movements from the province have been seen since the Holbrooke-Milosevic deal, but nothing like the levels that would be required to satisfy U.N. Security Council resolution 1199, diplomats report.

Skirmishing between separatist guerrillas of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and government forces continues to make it impossible for many refugees to return home and has actually caused some new refugee flows into the forests in recent days.

Schroeder-Lafontaine rivalry threat to new German government

BONN (AFP) — Social Democrat (SPD) Gerhard Schröder is ready to take over as German chancellor amid doubts about his relationship with the man who heads his party and who is to be his right-hand as finance minister.

The mass-circulation Bild asked in a front-page headline Wednesday: "Lafontaine, how dangerous will he be for Schröder?" a reference to incoming Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine.

And the more ponderous Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper, a widely respected conservative daily, said in a front-page editorial: "The real risk to the new government will prove to be the relationship between the chancellor and his treasury secretary."

If the centre-left is about to form its first government in Germany since that of Helmut Schmidt in 1982, then Schröder is the centre and Lafontaine the left.

The two had no trouble joining forces in the campaign that ended in their victory over conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl as Lafontaine had already lost when he ran for chancellor in 1990.

The party knew its only chance against Kohl was in backing the telegenic, media-savvy Schröder, who based his campaign on the call for a "New Middle" uniting Germans of both the left and the right in the fight against record unemployment.

But cooperation in ruling may be more difficult, as Lafontaine is a traditional, welfare-state-oriented leftist who has little sympathy for a new middle favouring risky competition as a means to job creation, rather than having the state guarantee employment.

Already during coalition talks with SPD allies the Greens, there were reports that Lafontaine was causing tension in his drive to expand the functions of the finance ministry to include European policy roles that have been the province of the economics and foreign ministries.

In addition, there was an overt power struggle for the influential post of leader of the SPD parliamentary faction, with Lafontaine trying to put his own man, or himself, at this position.

Schröder has come out for an expanded finance ministry and managed to head off Lafontaine over the parliamentary whip position.

But his biggest problem so far may be in the coalition agreement signed Tuesday

with the Greens that presented a timid platform still veering more to the left than the centre.

It, and Lafontaine's staking out of a large ministry, led to the withdrawal of Jost Stollmann as candidate for economics minister.

Stollmann was, more than any other personality in the incoming Schröder administration, a spokesman for the New Middle.

Forty-three years old and a self-made millionaire in the computer industry, Stollmann symbolised the hip, aggressive, young type of technocrat Schröder cultivates as businessmen who can revitalise the German economy.

Stollmann said he could not accept a truncated economics ministry and could not work with the fiscal measures in the platform, measures springing directly from Lafontaine's point of view.

He said the programme did not balance supply-side and demand-side policies and criticised the ecological tax that will raise petrol and other energy prices in order to finance cutting labour costs from payments to pension funds.

Parliament convenes Monday and elects Schröder as chancellor next Tuesday.

MP urges France to weigh reparations for slavery

PARIS (R) — A member of parliament said Wednesday the African slave trade should be declared a crime against humanity and urged France to set up a commission to study whether descendants of slaves should be paid reparations.

Christiane Taubira-Delannon, a left-wing deputy from French Guiana in South America, said she had proposed legislation recognising slavery and the slave trade as crimes against humanity.

Under the bill, a special panel would be created within six months of passage to weigh whether reparations were needed.

"This should be a committee of honest, wise and highly ethical individuals," Taubira-Delannon told Reuters.

"Personally, I have no need for reparations, but this is a question that we must reflect on," Taubira-Delannon, who is allied with the Socialist Party of Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, said parliamentary leaders had not given her an indication of when the bill might be debated.

"Quick action is unlikely, as the legislative agenda is very crowded for the remainder of the year. But we could find the time to debate it if there was the political will," she said.

Her draft bill would make it a crime in France to dispute the slave trade and would designate Feb. 8 as a day to honour its victims.

European nations denounced the transatlantic slave trade as "repugnant to human principles and universal morals" at the Congress of Vienna on Feb. 8, 1815.

Taubira-Delannon said she decided to propose the law following the observation earlier this year of the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in France's colonies.

"This is a part of my heritage," she said. "At the state level, this part of our history came out of the shadows just this year. It is unacceptable that a crime of this dimension has been shrouded in silence for so long."

The transatlantic slave trade began in the 15th century and flourished until its abolition at the time of the French Revolution in 1794. But it was reinstituted by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 before being definitively abolished on April 27, 1848.

Yeltsin has hospital check-up, IMF checks up economy

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin visited a hospital for a check-up Wednesday, as visiting officials from the International Monetary Fund began an examination of the sickly Russian economy.

Yeltsin, 67, has been recuperating from a malady which the Kremlin says is bronchitis since cutting short a visit to central Asia last week. A Kremlin spokesman said Yeltsin had eliminated all but the last traces of the illness.

"Everything is normal," a Kremlin spokesman said about the president's health.

During Yeltsin's visit to Moscow's elite Central Clinical Hospital doctors performed X-ray tests. Yeltsin then returned to work at his suburban Gorky-9 residence, the Kremlin said.

Dr. Rob Niven, a chest specialist at England's Wythenshaw Hospital, said an X-ray examination of a bronchitis patient could help exclude the possibility of another infection in the lungs, such as pneumonia or cancer. Yeltsin had pneumonia last year.

"You absolutely definitely don't have an X-ray for bronchitis as bronchitis is an infection of the airways and they don't show up very well on X-rays," he said.

Yeltsin's infrequent appearances in the Kremlin and perceived lack of leadership since August, when the government allowed the rouble to collapse and suspended payments of some debts, have prompted many politicians to call on him to resign.

The lower house of parliament is also considering a Communist-led effort to impeach him. But he has vowed to serve out his term until 2000.

Also Wednesday, officials from a visiting IMF team began talks with government officials on efforts to halt a decade-long economic depression that has intensified since August.

The fund in July agreed to lead an international package of bailout loans to Russia totalling \$22.6 billion. But it delayed its next \$4.3 billion tranche after a coalition gov-

ernment including Communists took power in September.

The IMF is seeking clear proof that the new Russian government is trying to cut spending and raise revenues to balance its books before it will make further loans.

The government of Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov has yet to come up with a comprehensive plan to revive the economy. But budget figures for the rest of the year show the government intends to spend twice as much it expects to take in.

The central bank has already started expanding the money supply since September, a process economists say will intensify inflation.

The chairman of the central bank, Viktor Gerashenko, who presided over quadruple-digit inflation in the early 1990s, Wednesday flew to London to meet foreign investors.

The Kremlin also said Yeltsin planned to speak to German Chancellor-elect Gerhard Schröder and maybe other officials later Wednesday.

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Answer to rumour mongers

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein is ill. That is why he is being hospitalised at the Mayo Clinic. He is being treated for cancer. That much he himself has explained on many occasions. When he left Amman on July 14, he frankly told Jordanians that he was suffering from fever and loss of appetite and that doctors had advised him to seek medical help at an advanced medical centre. When doctors told him they suspected lymph cancer, he again told Jordanians, and when doctors confirmed that diagnosis, the King informed his people. He went on Jordan Television to describe his case and the stages of chemotherapy treatment, and since he commenced therapy, he has appeared on television on many occasions, not hiding from Jordanians his loss of hair or weight.

True to his open and honest character, His Majesty sought, all these past months, to keep us informed of the progress of his treatment, stressing his determination to fight this ailment.

Mayo Clinic, aware of the stature of the King in his country and the world at large, issued a number of statements initially confirming that this form of cancer is treatable and, later, that the King is positively responding to therapy and progressing well.

Jordanians of course understand that the King's health is a cause of concern not only for them, but for the region in particular and the world at large. He has and continues to be a major player in the region's politics as evidenced by U.S. President Bill Clinton's appeal to him to help break the deadlock at the Wye Plantation talks between the Palestinians and Israelis.

However, we certainly cannot understand the seemingly benign talk about Jordan's stability and security after the King, since Jordan is one of the oldest countries in the region and its regime is the longest serving.

During decades of uninterrupted Hashemite rule, the Kingdom built powerful institutions that proved they could stand the test of time through their absorption of the numerous shocks that have shook the region. Institutions like the Royal Court, Parliament, the government, the judiciary and the army have strong foundations that weathered the 1951 assassination of founder King Abdullah, the turmoil of the 1950s and 1960s, the wars of 1967, 1968 and 1973, the domestic strife of 1970 and the 1990 Gulf war. During each of these, Jordan and Jordanians had to sacrifice, but always emerged stronger for it.

And today, while praying and waiting for the safe return of their beloved King, Jordanians are assured by and content with the way HRH Crown Prince Hassan and His Majesty's government are running the affairs of the land. When transition inevitably comes, Jordanians will not need protection from countries near and far. They have always rallied behind their leadership and protected their national interest.

All Jordanians — including the few voices of dissent — are determined to defend their political system against the plagues that have infected other countries in the region for years.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek reviewed a book written by the Israeli historian Letimar Raninofetch, "On The Edge Of Peace." The book unveils facts about peace negotiations on the Israeli-Syrian track, which, according to the writer, Syria was twice at the point of signing; once in 1993 — before the Oslo accords — and once in 1996. The writer, according to Fanek, says that the United States will support any progress in normalisation on the Syrian-Israeli front, a tactic meant to sour Iranian-Syrian relations and ultimately evict Iran from Lebanon. A deal was called off when common Syrian belief that Israel was very eager to sign an agreement, prompted President Hafez Assad to bargain for a better deal, according to Fanek. Furthermore, after the secret talks between the PLO and Israel resulted in the signing of the Oslo accords, Assad thought he had been deceived. According to Raninofetch, the deal made Syria furious and Hizbollah guerrillas intensified their campaign against Israel in 1996. The attack led to the failure of Shimon Peres in the elections, which, according to the author, lost Syria the chance for peace with Israel.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on the participation of His Majesty King Hussein in the current talks held between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel. The paper said the presence of the King at the Wye River Conference Centre is very important, because the U.S. President Bill Clinton personally asked the King to interfere in the talks. The invitation of the King shows how much respect the King commands, said the paper, which claimed that His Majesty might be the only one able to bridge the expanding gap between the PNA and Israel and reach a comprehensive settlement.

View from Academia

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Road safety and the magical Vs

LIFE ON our roads is particularly dangerous these days. I am saying this not because road accidents of all sorts are on the increase (they have been on the increase for more than two decades now), but because road habits have worsened noticeably and motoring inconvenience has escalated dramatically since the demise of the summer season. I do not know what is happening; people are driving like crazy. Some of them are totally careless and reckless.

Well, actually, I know — or at least I think I do.

It is true that the past summer season, which brought numerous vehicles of all shapes and sizes from abroad and numerous visitors, was by no means safe and convenient — especially with the advent of motorists from neighbouring countries whose driving habits and whose rhythm of motoring differ remarkably from ours — especially as a result of the infamous traffic jams.

However, two factors contributed to lessening the danger. The first was psychological. Our awareness of the existence of the different traffic rhythms just spoken of and our consciousness of the presence of heavy traffic on the road made us somewhat more careful and alert. We kept our eyes particularly open.

The second had to do with police visibility. The Public Security Department sent out (at major roads and intersections, inside the cities and on the main roads linking

those cities) more traffic police than customary. They directed traffic, organised its flow, watched out for violators, kept things under reasonable control.

The noticeable decrease in the number of vehicles on our roads, since the end of summer, has created an adverse effect. Instead of making motoring convenient and safe (as one would expect), it has made it inconvenient and hazardous. We have lost the alertness, carefulness, and vigilance we exercised in the summer. The absence of the intense police visibility we witnessed in the summer has also made motorists less alert and more daring.

I was riding with a motorist friend of mine for half an hour the other day. It was one of the most inconvenient and upsetting rides I have had for years. Not only was the number of traffic violations we spotted phenomenal, but the car we were in was about to be hit several times. One taxi driver made a U-turn in front of us in such a suicidal and rude way that we almost hit another car trying to avert a collision with him. "I wish I were a policeman," my friend kept saying whenever danger came near us.

People in our society keep talking about speed as a major cause of road accidents and road havoc. Well, speed is only part of it. The violations are all across the board. Motorists drive too close behind you, they do not signal when they turn left or right, they do not stick to

their lane, they do not respect stop or yield signs, they drop passengers in the middle of the road, they make sudden U-turns, they slow down in front of you for no apparent reason, and so on and so forth.

What should be done?

Until our school education, press and media sermonising, and social change work their visible effect on our psyches, attitudes and behaviour, we need two things — and two things only — from traffic police: more visibility and more vigilance. You can introduce as many traffic laws as you wish, you can increase the fines as much as you want, you can sermonise until doomsday, but unless the police are present on most roads and at most intersections, and unless they are vigilant, road havoc will continue not only to cause us serious headaches but also serious accidents and loss of precious life.

In the half-hour trip my friend and I made, we spotted at least five suicidal violations. How much would a mobile police vehicle (say in disguise) spot in a day or half a day?

Road safety will not become a reality in our part of the world unless violators, or the majority of them, are spotted and punished. Life on our roads will not improve unless and until the two magical Vs (police visibility and vigilance) become a reality. Until that happens, happy motoring and merry road life to us all.

Jerusalem life

Daoud Kuttub

This one's for the people

BY THE time this article is in print, Palestinian and Israeli leaders are expected to have reached an agreement at the Wye Plantation summit. Months, even years have elapsed without the implementation of some of the basic tenets of the Oslo Agreement. Many of that agreement's basic clauses that are connected directly to the well-being of the people of the region — specifically the Palestinians — have not been carried out.

Under the guise of national security, the Israeli occupiers have refused to allow Palestinians safe passage from Gaza to the West Bank; to fly out of an airport that has been ready for some time; and to release prisoners from jail (including those who support the peace agreement). Economic development of Palestine has been frustrated by the refusal of the Netanyahu government to fulfil clauses in the agreement that should have seen the Israeli army withdrawn — in stages — almost two years ago.

All these issues could have been implemented a long time ago. They were delayed by the present Israeli government to be used as bargaining chips. Israeli military control should never have been a licence to subjugate the Palestinian people and extract political concessions from the Palestinian leadership.

Long before the Wye Plantation meeting, Israeli leaders had been posturing. Decision were made, or rather not made, according to the whim of the people in power. By and large these actions or rather inactions were done for selfish reasons that had nothing to do with the situation on the ground, with security, or with the desires of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples of the area.

When all the details of the Wye Plantation agreement come out, I am sure that we will find out that the leaders have accepted many issues that they have been holding out on for months. All of a sudden redeployment, opening an airport in Gaza, allowing free travel and safe passage, and releasing prisoners will no longer constitute a grave danger to the state of Israel.

The question then is not how the leaders have managed to reach agreement, but why it has taken so long? If anything, the sad conclusion of all these deliberations is that politicians have been holding our peoples hostage. The well-being of our peoples have taken a back seat to the lust for power and control that a few people in high positions seem to be taking.

Now, thanks to President Clinton and King Hussein and the perseverance of our people, this lust is being replaced by common sense. If things go as

planned, we should slowly see the collapse of the wicked machine of occupation. At long last Palestinians will begin to enjoy some of the basic features of normality. Moving from one place to another, seeing loved ones, going to the university of your choice flying when you feel like it, and much more will no longer require the prior approval of a foreign military power.

I am not saying that the agreement at Wye Plantation is going to solve the Palestinian problem. It will take many more summits and much more goodwill before we can begin solving this complicated problem. As the Israeli occupation system will slowly crumble, I am sure that we will have to deal with another issue: apartheid. With the military out of most of the Palestinian territories the evils of a two-tier legal system will quickly emerge as the next major obstacle to overcome.

For now, we need to celebrate this small victory. One small symptom of this terrible 20th century conflict will hopefully be behind us.

Thank God that this human ordeal is now in its dying hours. With agreement being signed, it may be hoped that the tactic of using people as blackmail against your political opponents will no longer be used.

Now is the time for the people of the region to benefit.

Developing World

Riad al Khouri

A step in the right direction

JORDAN HAS long suffered from chronic trade deficits. Trade policy has thus traditionally tended to be mercantilist, and the state has depended on a wide range of high tariffs for revenue. However, after the drop in aid which began in the 1980s and the lower remittances of the current decade, there is now a realisation that for such a small country, integration into the world market could offer the best prospect to overcome the limited scale of the domestic economy. Reform measures have thus been adopted to implement tariff reforms and dismantle trade barriers.

These and other moves aiming to integrate Jordan into international markets have partly succeeded, and Jordan's economy is gradually opening up. This trend can be measured in various ways, but a rough index is the ratio of merchandise trade to GDP, up from 79% in 1994 to 84% last year. In other words, the value of imports and exports combined is becoming greater in proportion to the size of the economy as a whole.

In particular, when the peace process is finally back on track, Jordan's reformed foreign trade system stands to be a main beneficiary. In anticipation of these regional developments and in the context of globalisation in general, tariff levels, the number of rates, and the degree of tariff differentials have been reduced. As a result, Jordan now has six tariff bands (zero, five, ten, twenty, thirty, and forty per cent). Exceptions are man-

ufactured tobacco and tobacco substitutes (70-100%) and alcoholic drinks (180%). The government has also taken a number of measures to simplify Customs procedures, and a new Customs Law is to be implemented at the start of 1999 in order to streamline import valuation and Customs clearance. (The maximum tariff rate had been due to drop to thirty per cent when the new Customs Law comes into effect, but this cut seems to have been postponed.) Nevertheless, customs is still an area where a lot needs to be sorted out, and not just in Jordan. There is almost always the greatest amount of virulence and bad feeling in private debate in business and government circles in many places in the Arab World (and beyond), on the relationship between Customs authorities and businesspeople. To listen to some Jordanians talk, if there ever was a Manichean, cosmic struggle between good and evil in the economy, it would be between Customs and traders. The trouble of course is that nobody is sure who the good guys are and who the wicked enemy is. In Jordan in particular, where the public sector is still boss, Customs officials are often depicted as the Men in White Hats saving the economy and society from smugglers and other crooks; on the other hand, many businesspersons, with equal venom, describe Customs as the incarnation of wickedness, terrorising enlightened and benevolent types trying to make an honest living.

Be that as it may, what is certain is that Customs administration plays a crucial role in the economy. In fact, Customs behaviour helps determine the efficiency of transit, import and export trade, thus affecting the country's competitiveness. Customs is also responsible for helping to keep things like pornography and illegal drugs off the Jordanian market. In short, Customs administrators, like dentists or undertakers, perform an important task, even if they are unloved.

So it will come as good news that registration, documentation, and Customs procedures in Jordan continue to undergo streamlining and simplification through, for example, computerisation and decentralisation away from the headquarters in Amman. The new Customs Law is designed to make the trade environment healthier for both the local and international trader. The measure will in fact reduce the discretion of officials greatly, a problem at the heart of inefficiency in many Customs administrations, including Jordan's.

Customs officials in most of the region earn low pay. In other words, the salary scale is hardly a deterrent to bribes. Moreover, political patronage has reduced the formal merit system in most Arab Customs administrations, further breeding inefficiency.

Unfortunately, Arab governments in general and Jordan's in particular have less money to improve Customs salary scales; and whether the political will is there to curb patronage —

in Amman and elsewhere — remains to be seen. Nevertheless, further reforms need to be addressed.

The new Jordanian Customs Law is an impressive document based on the Automated System for Customs Declaration (ASYCUDA), developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as a core information software for Customs clearance. The bottom line is that the best computers and the nicest software may not help much if the human factor is problematic. As long as Customs officials are underpaid, and as long as they are regarded as bageynmen by the private sector (and vice versa), Jordan's foreign trade will still have a major element of inefficiency in it. For the time being, higher salaries for Customs people may not be on the cards, and changes in cultural attitudes could take a generation. Nevertheless, a lot can be done through better regulations and other means by smart public officials working with enlightened business associations and professional media. Cynical readers may feel that by using adjectives like "smart," "enlightened," and "professional" to describe these groups, I must be talking about Outer Mongolia or some other place very far from Jordan. Maybe they're right, but Jordan's economy has to be upgraded to survive the coming wave of globalisation. Anyway, the new Customs Law looks like small step in the right direction.

Do we stand a chance in agriculture?

This is the final part of a three part series examining Jordan's agricultural prospects.

Khairuddin Shukri is the Chairman of Jordan's Exporters and Producers Association for Fruits and Vegetables.

OUT OF all the components of the agricultural production-exports chain, the transportation link is the key to the success of the whole operation. Be it air freight or inland transportation, Jordan has a lot of improvement to make to upgrade the current fleet.

On the air freight side RJ, the national carrier, has two 707s of which one will go out of the service soon. Total air freighted agricultural exports last year was 3000 tonnes; around one per cent total volume of exports. The major problem for RJ is getting a definite commitment from the exporter to fill the space allocated, plus a particular date and time. For the majority of the exporters, who export to the whole-sale markets in Europe, this is impossible, because of the market uncertainties for that particular market at any given date.

As for those who export to supermarkets the story is different. Our major problem here is the consistency of the carrier's flights and times. I will simply lose my supermarket contract if I do not show consistency and continuity in supplying them. A supermarket that turns over \$50,000 per square metre per week will not accept any excuse for empty space, be it a delayed flight, a diverted one or even a cancelled flight. That is why exporters fight over space allocation on passenger flights which are more consistent.

Royal Jordanian Cargo Department admit they have a problem in getting loads back and forth to their destinations — a problem that results in losses on some routes, and subsequent price-hikes to cover part of those losses. In the past, they used to fly vegetables to Europe and fly back with fresh meat to Jordan. As imports of meats were restricted from Europe due to the BSE scare, the flight back to Amman is mostly empty. Instead, RJ is flying fresh meats from Khartoum to Amman now, with the flights going to Khartoum empty.

No matter how big and efficient your air freight

industry is, however, it will not satisfy the needs of massive agricultural exports to both eastern and western Europe. Inland transportation is the most feasible and important link in that regard. So far the use of Jordanian refrigerated containers has been limited to a couple of exporters because, out of a fleet of 800 refer trucks, only 14 meet the minimum requirements of fresh fruits and vegetables transportation. Following are the major reasons why we as producers/exporters cannot, and will not use Jordanian refrigerated trucks:

1) Unsuitable suspensions resulting in damaged and bruised produce.
 2) The internal dimensions of the trailers do not meet industry norms resulting in loads being un-palletised with a much higher cost per unit transported and handled.
 3) Mechanical unreliability and outdated refrigeration/controlled environment technology resulting in direct damage of the fresh produce transported.

Due to the age of the fleet (15-25 years), exporters prefer to rent modern trucks mainly from Hungary, Turkey, and Romania, rather than Jordanian refrigerated trucks. But here also there is a problem, because we, as exporters, are prohibited by law from using foreign modern trucks: Jordanian law prohibits foreign trucks from loading Jordanian fresh produce if the truck's original destination is not Jordan. Thus, every month hundreds of trucks pass Jordanian territory in-transit going back empty to Europe and we, the farmers and exporters, can not load anything on them. This same law protecting Jordanian refrigerated trucks is a major constraint in developing the Jordanian fleet. As long as I, the truck owner, have a law forcing everybody to use only my piece of junk, why should I bother to change it or improve it? Why should we, the farmers and exporters pay, the price of protecting another sector?



Features

By Andrew Marshall

THE FINANCIAL markets are good at many things. One of them, it might seem from the last few weeks, is humbling the mighty. Predictions made in good times, many of them backed by large amounts of hard cash, have turned sour. Senior executives at UBS and IMG Barings have fallen on their swords; the thundering herd of redundancies on Tuesday at Merrill Lynch are only the front-runners for thousands of downsized jobs. The marketmeisters of New York and the economic overlords of Washington alike have been left with plenty of egg on their faces.

Sadly, there was little humility on show last week, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank convened their annual meetings. There was quite a bit of hubris and some back-stabbing, but a sense of failure amongst all those pin-striped suits and highly polished black Oxfords? Get real.

Being right is at the heart of financial market culture. It is a world where victory is everything, and there are no prizes for second place. That is the self-projected image of investment banking, and Long-Term Capital Management, the hedge fund based in small town Greenwich, Connecticut, which had to be bailed out in a \$4bn U.S. government-led lifeline two weeks ago, was in many ways the epitome of that culture. Established by John Meriwether, a former Salomon's bond analyst who was regarded as little less than a deity by many, it traded on the microscopic differences that opened up between securities. A hedge fund like LTCM is trading for professionals. It is an esoteric business that carries allure and glamour, but also mystique. Its 150 employees were known as rocket scientists, a testimony to the mathematics which, in theory, they substituted for the less precise judgements of their peers. This was gambling as physics, and its protagonists had big balls and bigger brains. With their capital of \$4bn as security they borrowed another \$120bn, then used that to borrow around \$1 trillion — a sum roughly equivalent to the gross domestic product (GDP) of China. If the myth behind LTCM was powerful while it was alive, then in death it has become even more resonant. Here is a classical tragedy, according to the Authorised Version: A company run by intellectual giants, reduced to nothing overnight by a sudden and incomprehensible earthquake in the markets.

There is something about the company that was very American. Its foundation was science, a kind of fundamentalist rationalism that placed ultimate faith in the fusion of science and markets. And it had a peculiarly American faith in its own judgements. This is a country



that has not lost a war, which emerged into the world proclaiming itself to be a city on a hill, which saw its dominance underpinned by victory in World War II and then doubly underlined by the end of the Soviet Union. Putting up your hands, and admitting that you got things wrong, that somehow you finished up on the losing side of an argument, is not part of the culture.

At its best, this translates into a fierce and vital optimism that disdains risk in the name of enterprise. At its worst, it is a fatal arrogance. Long-Term Capital Management — the very name tempts fate, with its solid, reliable promise of a safe pair of hands — was powered by arrogance. It gave out an aura of assurance that was, in its last months, almost its only asset. Its underlying premise was that science, mathematics plus economics, had discovered the secrets of the financial universe, the underlying truths that drove markets. If one security went up, it was a sure bet that another, linked one would go down. Of course, it was far more complicated than that. You wouldn't understand. Give us the money and we'll turn it into a fortune. Trust us. We are winners.

And winners they were: There were two Nobel prize-winners in economics on the board, for instance. Nobel prizes, for goodness sake! How can you go wrong?

In the first place, they weren't such wizards, even in the good times. They were returning around 30-40 per cent to investors, which sounds a lot until you look at what financial markets were doing during this period. That is about what you would have got if you had simply chucked your money into a fund tracking one of the big market indices and left it there. "With that sort of risk, you expect a better return," says one New York banker. In other words, all of that gravity-defying brilliance,

the sheen of success, concealed a company which was basically pretty average. The spectacular feat which they managed was to make money when the market was going up and lose it when it went down. If these were rocket scientists, then God help NASA.

And as it turned out, they were quite a lot worse than average. When the good times stopped very abruptly, things went horrendously wrong, but Werner Von Brauns at LTCM apparently stuck to their rockets and their equations. These equations, as it turned out, were wrong. Economics describes events in the past and assumes that these relationships will persist into the future. When they don't, good economists pick through the evidence and try to work out what went wrong. A good economist, like any good theorist, tests assumptions against reality and discards theories when they don't fit the evidence. Long-Term Capital Management's Nobel laureates apparently couldn't manage that feat. When things went wrong they carried on regardless, stacking up the debt until no one would lend to them any more.

Of course, they weren't the only ones to botch the numbers. The economists at the IMF, too, thought they knew the future. Their equations told them that the vast flood of capital out of emerging markets simply could not happen. No matter that these equations were, at best, ten years old. What happened, in the IMF's view, was that some vast shift took place in the space-time continuum.

"Very large unprecedented movements," said Michael Mussa, the IMF's chief economist last week. "Ten standard deviations out in the distribution. That is why Long-Term Capital Management got into the difficulty it did. We had a millennial event; that is, something which the probabilistic model said would hap-

pen once in a thousand years happened in August, and it caught some people a bit off guard."

To hear everyone speak over the last week, you would think that we were discussing a medical prodigy. Everyone, led by the U.S. Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin, calls this "contagion." A bit like the Ebola virus. Except, of course, it wasn't. Markets are just big crowds of people interacting with each other, and for the last five years they have been attending a particularly lively rave off the M25. Then the drugs ran out and they rioted. The ring leaders were the people who helped shunt the capital around the world at the drop of a hat.

The bankers, in short, the chaps in the good suits and French cuffs at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington today were the rock throwers. And the guys from LTCM, who got blown up by their own Molotov cocktail.

As Paul Krugman, the leading U.S. economist, put it in Slate, the online magazine, "A realistic assessment of risk should take into account the possibility of these large, low-probability events — in effect, should allow for the reality that now and then shit does indeed happen."

But the wizards at LTCM, so the story goes, forgot about reality. They treated the statistical distributions found by their computers, based on data from a period when shit didn't happen, as if they represented the entire universe of possibilities.

As a result, they greatly understated the risk to which they were exposing both their investors and those who lent them money. And in return, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York moved in and propped up LTCM, bullied some of its friends into buying the thing and dealing it with in gentlemanly fash-

ion. No revolver and a glass of brandy for Mr. Meriwether, just back to the nice house in the Connecticut countryside. LTCM was too big to let it go, they said, too important.

Moral hazard is a technical term in banking to describe what happens when bad decisions get rewarded, and moral hazard is what is at stake in Washington. Long-Term Capital Management got bought out by the big American commercial banks, because it would have been too damaging to those same banks if it had been flushed down the toilet to join the thousands of smaller banks, shipyards, coal mines, corner shops and farms that have ended up in the cess pit of global capitalism in the past few years.

They were expendable; the men in the Mercedes weren't, because they lived in Connecticut, not Ulsan, Surabaya or Vladivostok. For heavens' sake! These are our friends, went the cry in Old Greenwich. That's David Mullins, who used to be at the Fed himself? Why, we had them over for cocktails just last week!

Maybe all of the bankers who put their own life savings into LTCM, and the banks which followed and then propped it up, were just being nice. Or maybe they were being dumb. Or maybe they knew that, in the end, Uncle Sam would always be there for them, if not for anyone else.

"Of course," says Mr. Krugman, "if you believe that big, supposedly sophisticated players can be that foolish — or, for that matter, if you believe that they are not foolish but do foolish things because the government will always bail them out — you start to wonder whether our whole financial structure is as sound as we like to imagine. Did somebody say 'crony capitalism'?"

The argument of the last decade has been that markets are everything. You can't buck the market, because that is what defines the truth. If you believe that shares in Buckfast Broadcasting should be worth more than they are because the company is a miracle, and everyone else thinks differently, then you're wrong.

It doesn't matter whether your family have mined coal here for a hundred years, there's cheaper stuff around. The market is the only thing that defines the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

All hail the market. It is the moving finger which writes on the wall, and if you don't follow its dictates, then screw you. As it turns out, that does not apply to dumb people who messed up in Connecticut, if they went to the right colleges. It sounds bad, it looks bad, and it smells even worse.

— The Independent

Science and technology

Cloudy future for solar energy

By Mike Crawley and Susanna Salafia

IN RURAL areas of Zimbabwe, there is plenty of sun but not much electricity. That's about to change. Zimbabwe is on a push to get solar energy systems into its villages.

At the forefront is a new project to supply 250 rural schools and 250 rural clinics throughout the country with photovoltaic systems, which produce electric current from solar energy, burning no fuel and causing no pollution. It's to be paid for by Italy's Foreign Affairs Ministry at a cost of 16 billion lire.

Unfortunately, projects like this are few and far between. Despite solar power's potential to replace some of the traditional fossil fuel energy sources being blamed for global warming, and its ability to provide power in places that have little or no access to a national electricity grid, photovoltaic systems have not taken off on a large scale in the developing world.

The World Bank and the U.N. Development Programme are certainly talking about promoting renewable energy sources. In recent annual reports, the World Bank has trumpeted what it calls its Photovoltaic Market Initiative for disseminating solar energy. UNDP is also pushing solar energy through its World Solar Programme, which started in 1996 and encompasses more than 300 renewable energy projects in 73 countries.

But experts in the field say the development heavyweights are in reality doing little to encourage solar energy. "Most of the multilateral development banks are lending money for fossil fuels instead of renewables," says Corin Millais, solar campaign coordinator

for Greenpeace in London.

The big funding bodies tend to invest in large-scale projects, while photovoltaic systems fit the needs of small-scale rural users, says Amal-Lee Amin, a doctoral researcher at the University of Sussex Science Policy Research Unit.

"In no way could a person who wants a solar house system could get a soft loan from the World Bank because it's just too small," Amin says.

She says rural people's limited access to credit is one of the key issues blocking more widespread use of photovoltaic systems.

As with all of its funding, World Bank loans for solar energy come with conditions that may not be easy to meet, ranging from long-term land leases to privatisation of national electricity systems.

The comfort of familiarity can also prompt founders, to stick with the status quo and shiver at the risk of shifting to new technologies.

But the international development funding bodies aren't the only obstacles facing solar power.

There's strong political pressure on governments — both from users and suppliers — to subsidise traditional fuel sources such as kerosene, giving it a greater price advantage over solar energy.

Although major oil companies like Shell and BP talk of major increases in their renewable energy investments, Millais says their claims need to be measured in comparison to their massive emphasis on non-renewable sources.

Per-capita consumption of electricity in the developing world more than doubled between 1980 and 1995. In Zimbabwe, per capita consumption of electricity is 925 kilowatt hours annually, compared with the average in the developed countries of more than 7,500 kilowatt hours.

The government has wanted for years to replace the use of candles and kerosene lamps in rural areas of the country with photovoltaic systems. In addition to the minimal environmental impact, it's easier to install the systems than bring electric current from urban areas.

The spots chosen for the Zimbabwean project have one of the world's highest annual amounts of solar radiation, says J.C. Battaglia, director of Agmin, the Italian procurement agency issuing the bid for installing the systems. He says the systems can operate for up to eight days without sun.

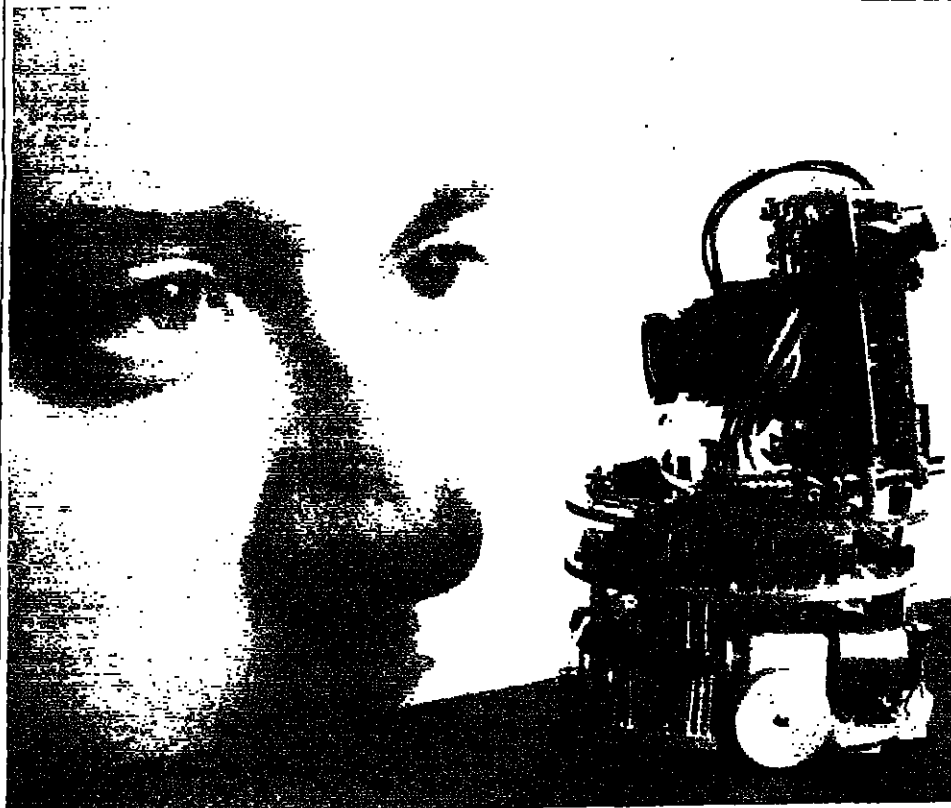
Some success with solar energy has been seen in India, which has an entire government ministry devoted to non-conventional energy sources. There's also the India Renewable Energy Development Agency, which channels World Bank loans to projects, and the government-funded Rural Electrification Corp. In some parts of India, entrepreneurs are increasingly stepping in to meet the demand for small-scale solar power.

But in South Africa, photovoltaic use has declined in recent years, something that Amin says was brought about by central government policies that interfered with the operation of small-scale local suppliers.

The European Union (EU) has set a target of generating 12 per cent of electrical power through renewable sources by 2010.

The United States and Japan are currently the world leaders in developing photovoltaic cells, while the EU runs the Valoren project to test photovoltaic technology. All are looking for export markets, and are gradually turning more attention to the developing world.

— Gemini News



The Robot Rat (photo David Mansell)

Robot Rat helps brain research

By Liz Clark
London Press Service

THE HUMAN brain is still a mystery in many ways and scientists all over the world are working hard to unlock its complex secrets.

At University College London (UCL), research fellow Dr. Neil Burgess uses a small robot (pictured) to help him understand the intricacies of the navigational and memory aspects of the brain and how they work.

He designed it to simulate the behaviour of a rat as it roams around foraging for food. Totally unratlike in appearance, the small robot does not in a very similar way to a rodent getting its bearings in an unfamiliar environment.

The researcher has combined investigations using the rat with experiments involving a computer game. The blood flow in the brains of human volunteers as they "wandered around" a highly realistic virtual

reality town in a well-known game was monitored to assess what was going on in their heads as they did so. The results produced indicated that human and rat brains share more in common than had previously been thought.

It was known that rats used a certain part of the brain, the hippocampus, primarily for navigating their way around their world. It had also been established that humans used that same area of the brain for a different function: To remember events.

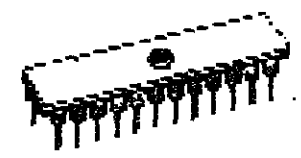
It was demonstrated that while finding their way around the virtual town, the blood flow in the brains of the volunteers was being diverted to the hippocampus, suggesting that a sense of space, as well as the human's special sense of time, help us to remember what happened in the past. Dr. Burgess is hopeful that in the future, based on the work he has done on the rat and its navigational skills,

he will be able to simulate human memory on a computer.

This study is but one in an extensive range of research projects in the field of neuroscience being undertaken at University College London. Burgess is a member of the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience (ICN) set up in 1996 to facilitate collaboration and intellectual interactions between members of UCL's many strong groups involved in cognitive neuroscience.

The institute has "formed twinning links with other cognitive neuroscience institutions, for instance in the United States and in France. A new unit linked to ICN was recently launched. This is the Gatsby Computational Neuroscience Unit, in which some of the world's best theoreticians in cognitive neuroscience are working to crack the mystery of the brain by creating computer models, using the latest tools and techniques.

chip talk



Of cornflakes and PCs

By Jean-Claude Elias

"PICK UP your PC and your cereals at the same time, from the same stores" read a recent ad in an English computer magazine. Has the PC really become such a common consumer staple, or is it what manufacturers want us to believe? In many aspects the PC has truly become a very popular product. It is everywhere and it does a thousand jobs. Computer performance is going up every three or four months and prices are going down virtually every week. The machine has also become much easier to operate than before.

This being said, I do not think it belongs on the same shelf as even the tastiest cereals. Not even next to the most sophisticated stereo system. Any way you look at a modern personal computer, you will still see a piece of equipment that is difficult to set up, that is constantly under the threat of a software or hardware failure, of virus attacks and all the series of problems that can arise as a consequence of human errors in operating it. Not to mention software that is difficult to operate and new peripherals — modems, joysticks, printers — impossible to connect to older hardware.

There are, however, two ways to use PCs and the first one does indeed make the system look much simpler than the second. In the first case, the user accepts the computer as the vendor sets it for him. He uses it "normally," avoids any

changes he is not sure of, reluctantly installs new programmes, browses the Internet with extreme caution, and generally speaking does not try to explore uncharted paths. He rarely makes the system crash and needs to call the technical people once a year only. For him the PC is a simple, virtually trouble-free device.

In the second scenario, the user considers it a must, a duty, to experiment with any piece of software he can put his hand on. Who cares where it comes from, if it's all bugged, not tested yet, impossible to uninstall afterwards, or even what it does at all? He thinks that the way Windows was set up isn't the best and tries hard to "improve" things. For this category of users system crash is a weekly if not a daily routine. Besides, reformatting a hard disk, installing and reinstalling all the huge applications over and over is such a pleasure! There is no doubt that for the first type of users the PC is closer to a cereal box than it is for the second. Nevertheless, the idea of storing and displaying computers with boxes of cornflakes may seem a bit exaggerated. But all of us PC users, from computer professionals to laymen, would love to see the advent of a PC as simple to operate and keep as say a wristwatch or a radio-cassette.

But as impressive as the computer popularisation process has been in the past decade, I believe the PC will still require a shelf on its own for a long time.

Expatriates in Arab Gulf states first to be hit by low oil prices

DUBAI (AFP) — As low oil revenues rock the Arab Gulf states those hardest hit will be the millions of foreign workers, mostly Asians, who make up the bulk of the workforce, economists said Wednesday.

In the last two years alone, at least three quarters of a million illegal immigrants have been expelled from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states through amnesties or government crackdowns.

Although Gulf governments are reluctant to give official or accurate figures for the number of expatriate workers, unofficially there are about 10 million out of a total Gulf population of about 25 million.

The majority of the foreign workers in GCC nations come from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Afghanistan and the Philippines.

On Tuesday, GCC's Secretary General Jamil Al Hajjailan voiced what many in the Gulf feel — that the number of expatriate workers living in the Gulf region is becoming a social, economic and political "danger."

"They pose grave social, economic and political problems that could grow more complicated in the future. If the number of expatriates continues to grow, it will be difficult, very difficult, to resolve these problems," Hajjailan said.

The heavily oil-dependent GCC states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have also encouraged or forced legally resident foreign workers to leave.

Faced with falling oil revenues and rising populations, most states have severely curtailed hiring foreigners into the public sector and have barred expatriates from some jobs altogether.

"In this era of declining oil revenues where about 40 per cent of Gulf nationals are 15 years-old or under, there is a growing need to create jobs for nationals," a Kuwait-based economist said.

"Unless those jobs are found there is a real threat of social and political problems. The pressure is on, we have no choice but to reduce foreign labour," he said.

But many are now finding that the public sector can no longer absorb any more nationals and have instituted laws requiring private sector companies to hire ever greater number of nationals.

"Most employers only see the short-term benefit since foreigners are cheaper than nationals. But overall there is a huge net loss because the government has to pay for things like health care and subsidised utilities," said a Saudi-based economist.

"You also have to consider the cost of remittances from foreign workers in the Gulf, which must run into the tens of billions of dollars," he said.

As oil prices continue at their lowest levels for a decade and even the most optimistic see little chance of a recovery before the end of next year, foreign workers have become a sensitive issue.

Kuwait has a population of 2.2 million, of which only 759,000 (34 per cent) hold citizenship, while foreigners account for as much as 85 per cent of the UAE's 2.4 million population.

Official estimates put the number of expatriates in Saudi Arabia at about a third of the 18 million-strong population and in Oman foreigners represent about one third of the 1.5 million population.

In Qatar, expatriates represent about four-fifths of the total population of about 522,000 and about 40 per cent of Bahrain's population of 620,000 are foreigners.

But economists say the real force for change in the Gulf's demographics will not be expulsions or the nationalisation of jobs but a change in attitude from Gulf nationals.

Despite the new barriers, most private sector firms still prefer hiring foreigners since most are prepared to endure conditions and salary levels that most Gulf Arabs would find unacceptable.

"Attitudes must change so that no job is considered shameful and anyone who contributes to the economy is considered a good citizen."

There has been enough pampering," the Saudi-based economist said.

U.S. Congress approves \$18b for IMF

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. Congress voted Wednesday to hand over \$18 billion to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), ensuring the lending agency is flush with cash to bail out the next wave of crisis-hit economies.

The final vote, by the Republican-led Senate, capped a year of heated congressional debate over IMF funding, depleted by multibillion-dollar rescue loans for Russia and three Asian states.

The vote was a major victory for the White House over the IMF's congressional opponents, wary of the institution's lending policies and secretive ways. Some lawmakers had threatened to give only \$3.4 billion to the IMF. Others wanted to cut off all U.S. funding.

But in the end, many critics agreed to support the IMF out of fear the global financial crisis would undermine the economy at home. The crisis, which started in Thailand in July 1997, has spread across Asia and Russia to Brazil and other Latin American nations.

The \$18 billion, part of a \$500 billion catchall government spending bill, was approved by 65 to 29 without debate. The House

approved the package on Tuesday on a vote of 333 to 95.

The White House said President Bill Clinton, who had lobbied lawmakers for months to approve the IMF cash, would sign the legislation into law.

In exchange for the IMF money, the Clinton administration agreed to work with other Group of Seven industrial nations to push through changes in the way the fund does business.

The legislation calls for the IMF to charge crisis-hit

countries more for emergency loans, to demand quicker repayment on some credits and to give the public and the Congress more information about its policy decisions.

(Continued on page 9)

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6438	0.5884	1.3471	116.88	1.5550	1623.00	1.8337	6.5712
DE Mark	0.6063	-	0.3578	0.8199	71.08	0.9458	987.05	1.1279	3.3528
GB Sterling	1.6895	2.7945	-	2.2905	196.65	2.6427	2768.78	3.1688	9.3679
CH Franc	0.7423	121.86	0.4360	-	86.88	1.1536	1203.56	137.46	4.0869
JP Yen	0.0086	1.4052	0.5027	1.1516	-	1.3293	13.87	158.47	4.7111
CA Dollar	0.6431	1.0485	0.3799	0.8519	1.33	-	1037.76	1.1829	3.5160
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0122	0.3620	0.8030	1390.43	0.9575	-	11.42	3.3938
NL Guilder	0.5395	88.60	0.3171	72.67	63.02	0.8396	875.25	-	2.9723
FR Franc	0.1814	0.2982	0.1057	24.4400	21.19	0.2821	33.63	33.6300	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7504	0.3770	3.6398	0.3007	3.6728	1901.50	3.4025
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2987	0.5317	5.1337	0.4241	5.1803	2117.77	4.7900
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0802	0.98	400.36	0.9072
Bahrain Dinar	2.85	1.8807	9.9485	-	9.66	0.7977	9.74	3982.97	9.0288
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0826	1.01	412.52	0.9348
Kuwait Dinar	3.3256	2.3578	12.4722	1.2537	12.10	-	12.21	4993.35	0.9348
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0211	0.9910	0.0819	-	408.82	0.9264
Lebanese/1000	0.57	0.4722	2.4978	0.2511	2.4241	0.2003	2.4481	-	2.2681
Egyptian	0.2839	0.2084	1.1023	0.1108	1.0697	0.0884	1.0794	441.30	-

Energy					Mid-East Currencies				
Oils	Last	Previous			Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY
Brent	0.00	0.00			SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4384	0.15688	0.35945
WTI	14.17	13.41			AE Dirham	0.2723	0.44765	0.16021	0.35705
Bonny	0.00	0.00			KW Dinar	3.3256	5.46747	1.95895	4.48228
Dubai	11.99	11.89			BH Dinar	0.3770	3.3611	1.58079	3.57654
UL Gas	140.00	138.00			CY Pound	2.0907	3.3725	1.2063	2.7633

Metal Prices			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Metal	Bid	Offer	Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-1-
Gold (oz's)	296.7	296.2	Month	Month	Month	Month	Year
Silver (oz's)	4.89	4.92	USD	5.2194	5.1881	4.9817	4.7131
Platinum (oz's)	339.5	341.5	GBP	7.4123	7.1244	6.8789	6.5641
AL (3 Months)	1336	1337	JPY	0.3455	0.3366	0.4364	0.4714
CU (3 Months)	1604	1605	DEM	3.4850	3.5603	3.5330	3.4913
Zinc (3 Months)	958	959	CHF	3.5000	1.4124	1.4813	1.5606
Lead (3 Months)	498	498.5	FRF	1.2500	3.5625	3.5273	3.5039
NI (3 Months)	4000	4000	ITL	4.7150	4.4180	3.9710	-

Main Equity Indices									
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls		
New York	DOW JONES	8470.06	-35.79	-0.42	8542.41	8446.12	8505.86		
New York	S&P 500	1061.5	-2.43	-0.23	1068.2	1058.08	1063.93		
London	FT-SE 100	5206.9	-45	-0.86	5282.4	5203.2	5251.9		
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	14216.33	408.28	2.96	14366.9	13921.4	13908.1		
Paris	CAC 40	3440.78	-51.74	-1.48	3470.59	3411.78	3482.52		
Frankfurt	DAX	4523.24	-72.55	-1.58	4637.5	4522.5	4595.82		

Energy			JOD Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	104.88	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1972	Spot	GB Sterling	1.2088	1.2145
Sugar (\$/ton)	219.3	Spot	DE Mark	0.4322	0.4344
Wheat (\$/ton)	127	Spot	CH Franc	0.527	0.5296
Soyab (\$/ton)	25.4	Spot	FR Franc	0.1289	0.1295
Tea (\$/kg)	125	Spot	JP Yen	0.6074	0.6104
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	NL Guilder	0.3833	0.3852
Rice (\$/ton)	395	Spot	IT Lira	0.4389	0.4391

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan

Peacemaking sets tone at Palestinian stock market

NABLUS, West Bank (R) — The Palestinian stock market is measuring its fortunes by the pace of peacemaking between Israel and the Palestinians.

"In the beginning of this year, daily trading reached one million dollars but in the last few months it has fallen to three hundred thousand," Safwan Bataina, general manager

of the Palestine Securities Exchange (PSE), told Reuters this week.

He said the drop in volume mirrored a fall in peace activity that resumed in earnest only last week with the opening of an Israeli-Palestinian peace summit in the United States.

But he said the number of shares traded on the PSE, which operates two

weekly sessions on Sundays and Wednesday, was still higher than during the same period a year ago.

In its latest session on Wednesday, Palestinian stocks closed slightly higher in weak trading, the PSE said.

The PSE's general index was up 0.86 points, or 0.54 per cent, at 160.27 on volume of 45,088 shares valued at 291,907 Jordanian dinars against 65,410 shares valued at 181,976 dinars traded on Sunday.

Shares in six of the 20 firms traded on the bourse changed hands on Wednesday, with two gainers and four losers. Palestine Real Estate Investment Co. suffered the steepest fall, dropping 3.49 per cent to 0.83 dinars. Palestine Investment & Development registered the biggest gain, climbing 4.35 per cent to 0.72 dinars.

"People will invest if they think that the peace process will advance but if they are pessimistic they will hesitate," Bataina said. "But despite all the difficult conditions, I can

say that what we have been doing was a miracle."

The PSE started operation in February 1997, accompanied by the licensing of Palestinian brokerage firms.

Twenty-eight companies are listed on the exchange, which is based in the self-ruled city of Nablus in the West Bank. Trading is conducted in dollars or dinars in the absence of a Palestinian currency.

Bataina said investment and trading were strongly restrained not only by the faltering political process over the past months but also by Israel's heavy restrictions on the movement of people and goods to and from the West Bank and Gaza.

Under interim peace deals, Israel controls border crossings into Palestinian self-ruled areas. Citing security concerns, it has frequently imposed closures which Palestinian activists have denounced as collective punishment that cripples their economy.

Brokers at the PSE said the state of the peace

process was the main factor influencing volume — what one trader described as "uncontrollable risk." But they also complained about the absence of legislation dealing with trade and investment.

"We have a great shortage of laws. We are in need of a complete package of legislation to organise the work of companies, taxis and banks and which encourages investors," said Nabil Jom'a, head trader at United Securities company.

Jom'a said trading was based on a 1964 Jordanian law, in addition to regulations set by the PSE.

Mohammad Salama, a broker at Global Security Company, said a new investment law was needed so that foreign investors could feel they had "a secure ground for bringing money in." Bataina said the drop in volume had caused losses at some brokerage houses, and caused investors uncertainty.

French theatre in Amman !

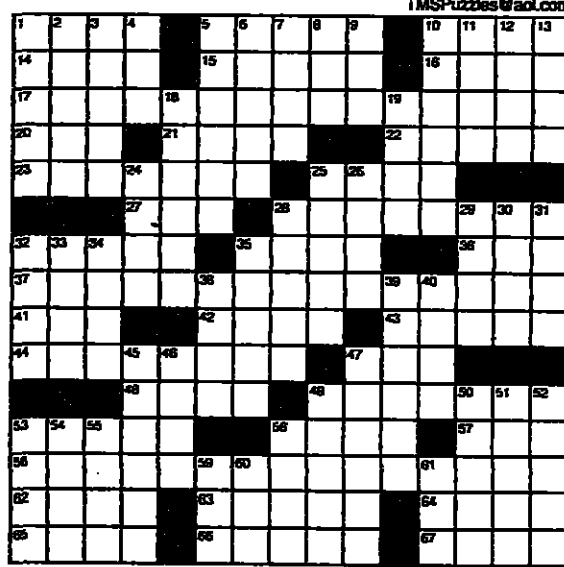
The French Cultural Centre presents
"Georges Dandin" by Molière
The play will be subtitled in Arabic
thanks to prompter
on Sunday 25/10/1998 at 8 p.m. at the
Royal Cultural Centre

Don't miss it !!

Tickets (5JD) still available at the
French Cultural Centre
Tel : 46 37 009
and the Crown Hotel Tel : 47 58 180
Sponsored by the Crown Hotel

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS
- Soft drink flavor
 - Abandon
 - Firepower
 - Touched down
 - Parasitic pest
 - Carla of "Cheers"
 - Doctor's orders
 - Soft metal
 - Ump's cousins
 - Cultural values
 - Sonnet stanzas
 - Map of developer's lots
 - Mooncall
 - Musical intervals
 - Take on
 - Mob melee
 - Pub offering
 - Doctor's orders
 - Teacher of Samuel
 - Affectedly nonchalant
 - Fred or Gracie
 - Pencakes
 - Blind top
 - Various functions
 - Precipitation protection
 - Offering at the Met
 - Compass direction
 - Kimono sash
 - Doctor's orders
 - Salacious stare
 - Putter Palmer
 - For two, in music
 - Blunders
 - Faced
 - Fast planes, for short



By Gerald R. Ferguson
Portland, OR

- DOWN
- Plays players
 - Star's comic partner
 - Mortgage attachments
 - Gobbled
 - Falls as ice
 - Hairdos
 - Carpets
 - Last of a cigar
 - Family dog
 - Cave
 - Casual negative
 - Rex Stout's wolf
 - Saunders
 - Magician's word
 - Warm up
 - Bugle call
 - Absentee ballot
 - Less caloric, in ads
 - Stadium levels
 - Brad
 - Otherwise
 - Spotted
 - Matured
 - Sub shop
 - Singer fledgling
 - Steps to a horse's bit
 - Stable female
 - Uncommon occurrence
 - Family group
 - Doctors, at times
 - Jacob's twin brother

- ACROSS
- LAIR
 - ABORT
 - ELAN
 - ASTA
 - LEVER
 - TACT
 - LATTE
 - TAKEMIKE
 - HOCKS
 - ELLI
 - BERON
 - UNTANGLE
 - TOR
 - LOTTO
 - SKEET
 - TROT
 - TOTEM
 - STAN
 - ENACT
 - BESOT
 - AVA
 - REDEMER
 - THEMES
 - PEA
 - STENO
 - CUTANDRUN
 - NAVAL
 - OPEC
 - RULED
 - BELA
 - PORK
 - ANNES
 - LOTS
 - ANIS
 - START
 - ENOS

- DOWN
- Moistened periodically
 - Do up
 - Gangsters
 - Approximately
 - Ocean motion
 - Look long and lustily
 - Docking place
 - At any time
 - Magician's stick
 - de deux (dance duet)
 - Notes of musical scales

Peanuts



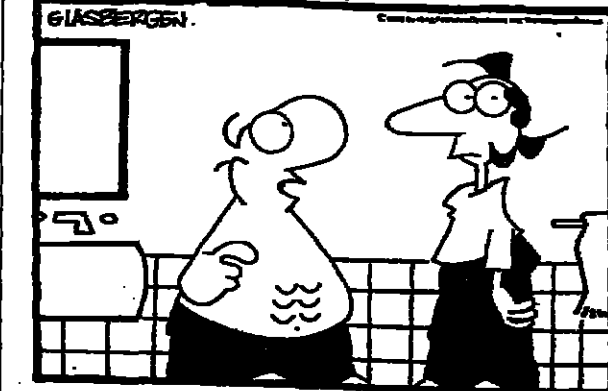
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

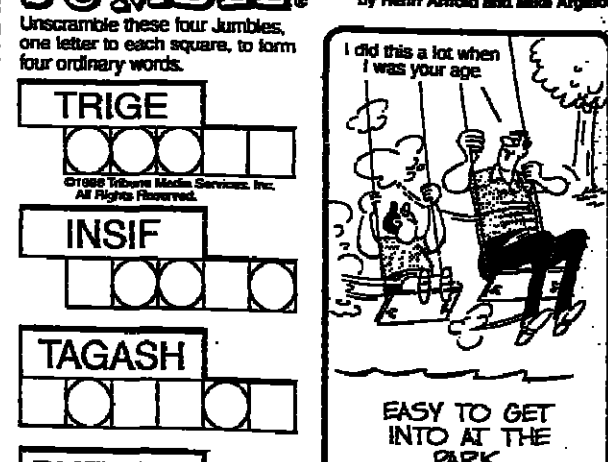


THE BETTER HALF, By Glasbergen



"My new gym membership came with a free set of ab decals!"

JUMBLE



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans: THE OF

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: NEWSY FAINT CHISEL FINEST
Answer: The tour of the vineyard amounted to this — A "WHINE" FEST

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Planning official describes privatisation as the motor oil needed to run the economy

YUSEF MANSUR, head of the technical unit at the Ministry of Planning, said in a lecture this week that there are still many reforms which have not been implemented until now such as the law for hypothecation current assets, the anti-monopoly law and the privatisation process which he described as the motor oil without which the economic engine would not run.

As such, he added, it is premature to evaluate the results of the economic adjustment programme which would not be complete until the privatisation process is completed. Mansur indicated that the programme followed by the Kingdom gives great importance to the supply side of the market or, in other words, the production side.

He explained that the supply side philosophy is based on reforming market imbalances as a way to remedy the economic situation and raise the level of prosperity. "This can be achieved through improving productivity and, subsequently, higher income, savings and investments that would lead to creating employment opportunities," Mansur pointed out.

The planning official pointed out that the most important flaw against this school of thought is the long-term effects or results which cannot be reaped in a short period. He explained that the reforms proposed by this school of thought does not affect the worker's pay or the return on capital directly but would rather improve the conditions that, at a later stage, lead to such targets. "This is a process that takes time depending on the variable and the environment where the

change occurs," Mansur said.

Noting that the stability of the currency is one of the most important pillars of the economic adjustment programme, Mansur stressed that the dinar's stability should be maintained especially as the inflation is still in a stable condition.

"In this context, we should set aside the monetary school as under all circumstances is among the weakest policies to tackle economic recession characterised by a rise in unemployment," he added.

Mansur recommended using both economic policies whereby long-term and short-term objectives be targeted. As such, he said that the role of market should be activated for long-term result and at the same time expand and deepen spending to the extent of encouraging spending by the consumers, the government or the investors.

He called for higher spending even if that is at the expense of higher indebtedness but, on condition that the spending be on development projects with high economic return in the medium and long-term in order to be able to repay the loans and interest in the future.

Mansur said the adjustment programme aimed at reforming the trade sector and the legislative environment in addition to launching the privatisation process and reforming the financial sector which covers:

1. Boosting the efficiency of the banking sector and improving its competitiveness.
2. Providing a larger portion of financing for acquisition or lending purposes on medium and long-term basis (Al Dastour + Al Rai).

Visa says Gulf Arab spending with card doubles

DUBAI (R) — Visa card expenditure in Arab Gulf states more than doubled to \$13.5 billion in the year to June 1998, Visa International has said.

A company statement said spending by Visa cardholders in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman rose 50.89 per cent from \$6.6 billion at the end of June, 1997.

The number of Visa credit cards held in the largely cash-based region increased by 26.7 per cent to 2.38 million in June of this year.

The average transaction value was highest in Kuwait at \$358, followed by Qatar with \$299 and Saudi Arabia with \$267.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
JORDAN STOCK EXCHANGE - AMMAN											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 22/10/1998											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	PERCENT
355,800	170,000	ARAB BANK	16.7	.98	18	340	68965	202.75	204.00	1.25	0.61
1,920	1,800	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	12.3	0.01	1	6750	10200	1.52	1.52	0.00	0.00
1,700	1,600	RAKE OF JORDAN	5	0.00	1	17400	18151	1.04	1.07	0.03	2.84
1,300	850	NID. EAST INV. BK.	59.1	0.00	1	1750	1575	1.89	1.90	0.01	0.53
6,510	2,610	THE HOUSING BK.	16.9	3.75	35	25742	68868	2.69	2.67	-0.02	-0.75
2,450	1,700	JOR. EDU. BK.	1.1	0.00	10	471	797	1.70	1.70	0.00	0.00
800	530	JOR. GULF BANK	6	0.00	11	26750	15640	1.57	1.55	-0.02	-1.28
3,970	1,580	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.8	0.00	27	14483	22610	1.58	1.55	-0.03	-1.91
970	700	KEIT. AL-MAL (BANKING)	3.4	0.00	2	250	175	1.70	1.70	0.00	0.00
850	800	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	2	15000	9300	1.62	1.62	0.00	0.00
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 267.69	CHANGE: +0.44	116	108936	216283				
1,350	810	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	46.1	0.00	2	10350	8694	1.88	1.84	-0.04	-2.13
2,950	1,840	JOR. FARMER INSUR.	7.3	9.62	4	3000	7860	2.65	2.60	-0.05	-1.92
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 127.45	CHANGE: -0.39	6	13350	16554				
2,340	1,410	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.2	5.81	14	8600	11369	1.43	1.42	-0.01	-0.70
3,780	1,550	JOR. ELECTRICITY	12.2	8.49	1	100	182	1.88	1.82	-0.06	-3.19
1,790	1,060	UNIFIED CO.	4.9	10.00	1	1950	2121	1.08	1.10	0.02	1.85
780	470	UNION LAMP DIV.	9	0.00	1	250	120	1.48	1.48	0.00	0.00
1,350	1,050	UNIFIED FOR FINAN. INV.	1.3	6.43	1	100	100	1.05	1.05	0.00	0.00
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 104.11	CHANGE: -0.06	57	10400	12892				
4,110	1,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	11.3	0.00	27	331825	353801	1.05	1.07	0.02	1.90
11,250	10,050	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	10.0	8.66	6	346	3560	10.34	10.27	-0.07	-0.68
5,950	4,450	JORDAN STEEL	7.9	8.16	4	195	1050	5.00	4.90	-0.10	-2.00
1,740	1,060	ARAB PHARM. IND.	6.9	2.99	17	11976	29964	2.50	2.51	0.01	0.39
1,440	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANUFACT.	8.7	9.52	3	780	788	1.05	1.05	0.00	0.00
6,350	4,700	DAR ALDAMA DV. INV.	6.0	7.07	69	93900	467545	5.89	4.95	-0.94	-15.88
2,880	1,700	ARAB ALUM. IND.	12.8	14.37	2	400	870	1.77	1.74	-0.03	-1.69
530	350	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	12.2	0.00	3	3000	1080	1.36	1.36	0.00	0.00
3,720	1,880	GENERAL INVESTMENT	15.3	2.98	1	1000	3360	3.30	3.36	0.06	1.82
770	370	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	10.0	0.00	4	1150	558	1.50	1.49	-0.01	-0.67
540	280	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	5	1900	2308	1.30	1.30	0.00	0.00
1,760	760	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	10.3	7.92	1	100	101	1.99	1.01	-0.98	-49.25
1,540	1,100	UNIV. CABLE WIRE HYAC	30.0	1.50	1	250	160	1.60	1.60	0.00	0.00
1,250	530	UNIV. FOODS IND.	9.9	9.68	5	3250	1983	1.60	1.62	0.02	1.25
890	480	JOR. IND. RESOURCES	8.3	9.47	3	850	408	1.49	1.48	-0.01	-0.67
1,540	1,100	WALL. CHLORINE	9.7	8.17	3	5400	1652	1.70	1.70	0.00	0.00
1,080	600	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	8.7	16.13	1	100	62	1.62	1.62	0.00	0.00
1,560	1,150	EL. LAY READY WEAR	41.5	0.30	2	1250	1475	1.19	1.18	-0.01	-0.84
1,210	910	INTL. TOBACCO	7.3	5.61	10	1500	1560	1.04	1.04	0.00	0.00
1,540	1,100	JORDAN CEMENT	9.7	8.17	3	1000	870	1.88	1.87	-0.01	-0.53
730	580	WAT. ALDUBAIB	32.2	0.00	3	1300	845	1.65	1.65	0.00	0.00
670	520	NID. EAST COMPLEX	9.4	0.00	2	1100	572	1.52	1.52	0.00	0.00
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 71.64	CHANGE: -0.10	215	477843	887673				

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You'll be thinking of money the whole time the sun's in Scorpio, which is another month. And you may not be quite comfortable with that sensation. Today, to get used to it, how about an exercise? Once you get the work done, head for the hills. Once your mind is clear, everything looks possible.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Ask money questions now, privately. The person with the answers is willing to talk, but not to everybody. If you're running into problems, it's because you haven't shown your credentials. Let the other person know you can be trusted, and you can help achieve a goal. That's got to be the other person's goal, too, not just your own.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The work load is intense for the next month or so. It's not settled into a regular routine, either. Just when things are clicking along nicely, something you don't expect is likely to happen. You're going to have to be flexible, but that's OK. Flexibility is your middle name. Help the others with it. For some of them, it's hard.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) All that work you let slide has to be done right now. You can easily whip everything into shape. You're so in love, this is merely an annoyance. Nothing's as important as what you and your sweetheart are saying to each other. A commitment made now will be fun and also a good working partnership. Make it happen.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The moon is now in Sagittarius, which always fights your fire as well as enlightens your attitude. So a project that seemed too difficult yesterday is going to start seeming less significant than it used to be. Your attitude is changing, and your luck is changing too, for the better.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're almost ready to make your decision, but aren't quite sure about a few matters. Maybe you'll have to move, or change something about your living environment. Maybe you won't want to be with the same people, after you become magnificent. Well, the ones who empower you will still be around

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

when you're more powerful, right?

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're in a learning mode today, exactly where you should be. Yes, you could become the very person you always hoped and dreamed of being. But there

are a couple of little things you'll have to do to make it happen, and the first is to start studying. Figure out what you need to learn, then go learn it.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The moon is in Sagittarius, which means it's time to go shopping. It's in your second house of money, and with Pluto there too, it looks like you could find a real bargain. You might find a genuine treasure, actually. Cruise past that store where you're most likely to find one.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You may want to clear up a few things that have been bothering the back corners of your mind. You value truth and justice, and something may have happened that you felt was unfair. Well, it's time to get that handled and put to rest. At least get it down on paper, starting now. That's a first step in the right direction.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You're focused on group endeavors, playing with friends, and all sorts of team projects. It looks like there's something that must be done quickly, however, so although you would like to be hanging out with your buddies all day, you may not have that opportunity. That's OK. It's Friday, and you've still got the weekend.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) That light at the end of the tunnel should be visible for a brief moment today. You may feel things are clouding over again, though, when you realize you'll have to dance to somebody else's tune. This isn't easy for you, but it's not impossible, and it could be a useful skill to learn. Today, practice.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Travel is likely, possibly tonight or tomorrow. Plan along those lines, at any rate, since the conditions are so marvellous. A job opportunity could become available today. The two concepts may be linked, as in the job requiring travel. Entertain all possibilities, and move quickly when you see an attractive one.

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U.S. Congress approves \$18b for IMF

(Continued from page 8)

Congressional approval was a breakthrough for the cash-starved IMF because contributions from other countries depended on the U.S. cash.

House and Senate passage means the 182-member IMF will be able to tap into some \$90 billion in new resources as it struggles to help countries caught in the global financial storm.

The IMF is expected to announce a big rescue package for Brazil soon, and it could offer billions of dollars more to other Latin American states hit by the contagion.

Republican leaders said they had little choice but to replenish IMF reserves amid signs of a worsening U.S. economy.

Last week the Federal Reserve cut interest rates for the second time in less than three weeks in a surprise move aimed at easing a growing credit crunch.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Georgia Republican, urged lawmakers in the final days of the congressional session to back the package, arguing it would constitute "a big gigantic gamble" to reject IMF funding with the global economy on edge.

IMF supporters blasted the Republican leadership in the House for waiting this long. "It is complete folly," said Senator Chuck Hagel, a Nebraska Republican. "We lost eight months of confidence, and markets respond to confidence. We showed America is not engaging... To hold it back as a bargaining chip like this leadership did was absolutely wrong."

Havelange attacks FIFA's senior European members

South Korean football chiefs defend 2002 co-hosting

PARIS (AFP) — Former FIFA president Joao Havelange has launched a scathing attack on European members within football's governing world body.

The 82-year-old Brazilian, in an interview with France Football, blames European officials on the executive committee, for forcing him to agree on South Korea and Japan co-hosting the 2002 World Cup.

"The idea was pushed by the Europeans just to upset me," said Havelange.

"But a president never loses. When I found out what they were plotting I put forward co-hosting myself to stop them from causing me trouble. I am more intelligent than them," he added.

He also revealed the contempt he holds for Lennart Johansson, head of UEFA, Europe's ruling football body and a senior FIFA executive vice-president.

The Swede had stood against Sepp Blatter, former FIFA general secretary, to replace Havelange who retired last June after ruling world football for 24 years.

Havelange was asked

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea on Wednesday defended the joint hosting of the 2002 World Cup finals with Japan that former FIFA president Joao Havelange now says was a mistake.

Havelange was quoted by a French football magazine as saying European officials had only supported the co-hosting scenario to irritate him.

"We have known for years that Havelange was privately against the co-hosting idea, so his comments come as no surprise," a source with the 2002 organising committee said on condition of anonymity.

what he thought of Johansson.

"He is president of UEFA," he replied. Pushed if that was all he thought of him he said: "That's all."

He also cast doubts on Johansson's desire to look after the interests of football.

"But in reality, it was a wise idea to allow South Korea and Japan — which have a long history of unhappy relations — to cooperate to share the World Cup as a means of bringing them closer together," he added.

The Japanese Football Association refused to comment on Havelange's remarks to the France Football magazine.

Both countries are very sensitive to criticism of the first finals to be staged in two countries.

The two neighbours have spent most of this century bitterly divided over Japan's occupation of Korea from

1910 to 1945 which has left an intense legacy of bitterness in Korea.

The award of the finals to the two countries has forced them to cooperate, although officials admit relations between football chiefs over the competition have not always been easy.

"Of course there have been problems, that is to be expected, but in reality we are advancing with the preparations," one official said.

Havelange, 84, was head of FIFA for 24 years until he retired in June to make way for Sepp Blatter.

"Perhaps those of Europe," he remarked.

Havelange fought a bitter election campaign for Blatter to ensure Johansson would not replace him.

It paid off when Blatter won so many votes in the first vote in Paris in June that a stunned Johansson was forced to concede

defeat.

Afterwards Blatter quickly moved to heal the split between himself and Johansson, describing him as a "outstanding gentleman of football."

But Havelange's comments are likely to reopen the wounds according to one senior FIFA member

Brazil, France top FIFA rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Latest FIFA rankings published Wednesday:

1. Brazil	73.57 pts
2. France	69.01
3. Germany	67.37
4. Croatia	66.47
5. Argentina	65.77
6. Italy	65.04
7. Czech R.	64.43
8. Yugoslavia	64.19
9. Netherlands	62.71
10. England	62.16
11. Mexico	61.76
12. Romania	59.81
13. Morocco	59.62
14. Norway	59.12
15. Chile	58.69
16. Spain	58.63
17. U. States	57.04
18. Denmark	55.33
19. S. Korea	55.12
20. Egypt	55.07
21. Japan	54.88
22. Austria	54.78
23. Zambia	54.55
24. Paraguay	54.26
25. Sweden	54.05
26. Tunisia	53.88
27. Colombia	53.05
28. S. Africa	52.73
29. Slovakia	52.56
30. S. Arabia	52.32

Sampras, Rios head ATP Tour rankings

PARIS (AFP) — Following are the latest ATP rankings:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	4327 pts
2. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	3674
3. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3593
4. Carlos Moya (Spa)	2959
5. Petr Korda (Cze)	2829
6. Andre Agassi (USA)	2681
7. Alex Corretja (Spa)	2626
8. Karol Kucera (Svk)	2615
9. Tim Henman (Gbr)	2488
10. Evgeni Kafelnikov (Rus)	2463
11. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2448
12. Jonas Bjorkman (Swe)	2149
13. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	1886
14. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	1877
15. Jan Siemerink (Ned)	1837
16. Albert Costa (Spa)	1823
17. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1807
18. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1618
19. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	1610
20. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	1593
21. Thomas Johansson (Swe)	1539
22. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1537
23. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	1500
24. Thomas Muster (Aut)	1454
25. Todd Martin (USA)	1365
26. Michael Chang (USA)	1302
27. Francisco Clavet (Spa)	1289
28. Byron Black (Zim)	1254
29. Wayne Ferreira (Rsa)	1143
30. Magnus Larsson (Swe)	1131

UEFA Cup

Villa shine as other English clubs struggle

PARIS (AFP) — Aston Villa, fielding a team of 11 Englishmen, provide the sole bright moment for English Premiership clubs when they scored a memorable 1-0 win away to the Spaniards of Celta Vigo in a UEFA Cup second-round, first-leg match on Tuesday night.

Striker Julian Joachim netted the only goal for Premiership leaders Villa in the 15th minute when he latched onto a through ball from Stan Collymore and fired coolly home.

Villa looked as solid as a rock at the back despite plenty of Vigo pressure and goalkeeper Michael Oakes — deputising for the injured Mark Bosnich — was a virtual spectator for much of the game.

"I'm very proud of the way we performed, particularly in the second half," said Villa manager John Gregory.

The other English clubs enjoyed rather less success with Liverpool held to a 0-0 draw at Anfield by Valencia after surprisingly resting

England striker Michael Owen and Leeds losing 1-0 away to AS Roma, whose goal came from Marco Delvecchio after 18 minutes.

Leeds had Portuguese midfielder Bruno Ribeiro sent off in the second half of their brave defeat.

"It was a hard game, but that's the way English teams play and I didn't expect any different," said Roma coach Zdenek Zeman.

"We weren't lucid enough to take advantage of being a man up in the second half ... we didn't find the right combination to put someone through."

Joint Liverpool Roy Evans defended his controversial decision not to play Owen against Valencia.

"Michael can't carry the world on his shoulders for us and England," he said. "He has played so many games and we have to keep looking at him for signs of tiredness. He's 18 years old and needs his rest occasionally."

Valencia coach Claudio Ranieri, celebrating his 47th birthday, was delighted with

his team's performance.

"My side played very well, defended excellently and followed my instructions," he said. "They have given me a big birthday present with this result."

The other British representatives in action, Celtic of Scotland, were held 1-1 at home by FC Zurich of Switzerland.

Norwegian Harald Brautbakk put Celtic into the lead but Urs Fischer equalised 15 minutes from the end. Celtic's woes were increased by having Tommy Boyd sent off before half-time, when he conceded a penalty which the Swiss side squandered.

Celtic's crosstown rivals Rangers travel to play their first-leg match against Bayer Leverkusen in Germany on Thursday night.

French quarter Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille and Monaco, meanwhile, all put themselves in sight of the third round with superb performances away from home.

Lyon, who put out English side Blackburn in the first

round, won 2-1 in Bucharest against former European champions Red Star Belgrade, while Bordeaux won 1-0 away to Dutch high-flyers Vitesse Arnhem.

Monaco drew 3-3 with Graz AK in Austria after leading until injury time, while Marseille finished 1-1 after their visit to Werder Bremen.

Lyon came from a goal down to win with a stunning shot on the turn by Frederic Kanoute with just six minutes left against Red Star Belgrade.

Political unrest in Kosovo forced the match to be switched to neutral territory outside Yugoslavia, a decision which infuriated the Red Star players — who tore into the match in Bucharest as if their lives depended on it.

Red Star went ahead with a Dalibor Skaric penalty in the 58th minute after Florent Laville brought down Milinko Acimovic inside the penalty box.

Lyon stormed back, however, and Swiss forward Marco Grassi levelled the scores with a fine drive on 70 minutes.

Kanoute's superb second goal just minutes after he came on as a substitute for the injured Alain Caveglia wrapped up the win as he blasted home a left-footed volley following a Vikash Dhorasoo free-kick.

Bordeaux survived several uncomfortable moments in the second half to escape with a win in Arnhem.

Sylvain Wiltord, the leading scorer in the French league, scored the only goal just before half-time, when he crashed home an acrobatic volley after a cross from the right from playmaker Ali Bernabé.

It was Vitesse's first loss at their high-tech new stadium after being unbeaten there for close to two years.

Marseille took the lead midway though the second half in Bremen when Florian Maurice sidefooted the ball

home, but Werder hit back almost immediately through veteran Andy Herzog, who netted with a vicious low drive from the edge of the area.

Two goals by Croatian striker Robert Spehar helped Monaco, third in the French table, to their draw in Graz.

Ludovic Giuly looked to have grabbed a late winner for the Monegasques but Anton Ehmman headed home deep into injury-time at the Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium.

Spehar, a reserve for much of the time since his move from FC Brugge last year, again took advantage of the absence of injured World Cup stars Thierry Henry and David Trezeguet, having also netted twice at the weekend against Montpellier.

Nigerian Benedict Akwuegbu also bagged a pair for Austrian pacesetters Graz who nonetheless face an uphill task in the second-leg match.

Yugoslav international Darko Kovacevic scored twice in the first 10 minutes to spearhead Spain's Real Sociedad to a 3-2 win away to Dynamo Moscow, who had Sergei Shaniuk sent off late in the game.

Italy's Fiorentina, the Serie A leaders, all but secured their berth in the third round with 2-0 win away to FC Grasshopper in Zurich.

Argentine ace Gabriel Batistuta and Anselmo Robbati scored the goals.

Two other Italian clubs — Bologna and — came up with less impressive performances.

Klaus Inngesson scored a late winner as Bologna edged Slavia Prague 2-1 at home, while Poland's Wisla Krakow held Parma to a 1-1 draw.

Giuseppe Signori broke a goalless deadlock in the 50th minute in Bologna, only for Slavia's Richard Dostalek to score a 67th-minute equaliser.

Swede Inngesson then nod-



Liverpool's Jason McAteer (R) nips past the outstretched foot of Valencia French back Alain Roche in a UEFA Cup second-round, first-leg match at Anfield road stadium (AFP Photo)

ded home just seven minutes from the whistle to give the Italian club every chance of reaching the third round.

Parma will also be favoured to go through despite only sharing the spoils in Poland after a match that generated controversy.

Enrico Chiesa nodded Parma into the lead after just two minutes, but Tomasz Kulawik cracked home an equaliser midway through the second half to give the Poles some hope for the second leg in a fortnight's time.

Italian international Dino Baggio claimed he had been hit by a knife thrown from

the crowd during the game. "I felt something hit me on the head, then I saw a knife on the ground and thought it had touched me," said Baggio. "I didn't want to believe it — it seemed impossible."

The midfielder carried on playing after the second-half incident but had five stitches in the wound after the match.

The Spaniards of Atletico Madrid will be confident of progressing after an impressive 4-2 win away to CSKA Sofia in Bulgaria. World Cup squad member Kiko led Atletico with a goal in each half.

Real Betis are also well

placed to progress after a 1-1 draw away to Willem II Tilburg in Holland — a game in which both goals were scored in the last five minutes.

Only 12,000 fans turned up for VfB Stuttgart's match against Belgium's FC Brugge and the home team stumbled to a 1-1 draw.

Nigerian Jonathan Akpoborie opened the scoring for Stuttgart after just eight minutes, but Sven Vermant equalised in the 70th minute when he stroked the ball home after beating the Stuttgart offside trap.

UEFA CUP RESULTS

Wisla Krakow (Pol)	1	Parma (Ita)	1
Bologna (Ita)	2	Slavia Prague (Cze)	1
Red Star Belgrade (Yug)	1	Lyon (Fra)	2
Graz AK (Aut)	3	Monaco (Fra)	3
Dynamo Moscow (Rus)	2	Real Sociedad (Spa)	3
VfB Stuttgart (Ger)	1	FC Brugge (Bel)	1
Grasshopper Zur. (Swi)	0	Florentina (Ita)	2
Vitesse Arnhem (Ned)	0	Bordeaux (Fra)	1
CSKA Sofia (Bul)	2	Atletico Madrid (Spa)	4
Willem II Tilburg (Ned)	1	Real Betis (Spa)	1
Liverpool (Eng)	0	Valencia (Spa)	0
AS Roma (Ita)	1	Leeds United (Eng)	0
Werder Bremen (Ger)	1	Marseille (Fra)	1
Celtic (Sco)	1	FC Zurich (Swi)	1
Celta Vigo (Spa)	0	Aston Villa (Eng)	1
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Rangers (Sco)	—	playing Thursday	



Lyon's midfielder Jacek Bak (R) fights for the ball with Belgrade's Milenko Acimovic, during the second round of their UEFA Cup match (AFP Photo)

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA 1' Nathan Lane & Lee Evans .. in MOUSE HUNT Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA 2' George Clooney & Nicole Kidman .. in THE PEACE MAKER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD CONCORD 11 Michael Douglas & Sean Penn .. in THE GAME Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD 22 Robert Redford .. in UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Comedian Mohammad Huneidi .. in SAEEDI AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 Watch out for the new play
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Experts to weigh evidence on Iraq weaponisation of nerve gas

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Chemical weapons experts from seven countries meet here from Thursday in a bid to determine conclusively whether Iraq weaponised lethal VX nerve gas.

The experts at the two-day meeting "will assess the different analyses from different samples" of Iraqi warhead remnants tested by U.S., French and Swiss laboratories.

U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) spokesman Ewen Buchanan said.

But Buchanan cautioned that the results of the technical meeting are only expected to be released next Monday or Tuesday, when UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler informs the U.N. Security Council of the findings.

Butler called the meeting last week after receiving final results from a French defence ministry laboratory outside Paris — delivered personally by a laboratory specialist.

The results from a second set of samples tested by a U.S. army laboratory at Aberdeen, Maryland, which were communicated to UNSCOM last Thursday, are also to be discussed by the experts who are

meeting here for the second time in one month.

Out of the first set of 44 samples tested by the U.S. laboratory, 11 showed the presence of VX gas.

However 40 samples tested in Switzerland, and the first 35 tested in France were negative with regard to VX. According to U.N. sources the second batch tested by the same U.S. laboratory was also negative.

Questions remain about five French samples, whose results were communicated after those of the main batch came through. France, which is sympathetic to Iraqi positions, has denied deliberately delaying the remaining results.

A U.N. diplomat has confirmed a New York Times report on Oct. 7 that traces of chemicals linked to VX had been found in the remaining French samples.

The newspaper quoted experts as saying that there was strong evidence that the samples had revealed two chemicals found in VX, although not only in VX.

Butler has refused comment on the highly sensitive issue before reporting to the U.N.

Security Council on the complete findings.

Iraq denies that it ever weaponised VX, after being forced by U.N. weapons inspections to admit to producing four tonnes of the chemical agent.

Under U.N. resolutions, eight-year-old sanctions can only be lifted when the Security Council is satisfied that Iraq has fully dismantled its weapons of mass destruction.

Baghdad says it has done so, and is demanding an early lifting of the sanctions.

If the French tests fail to prove that VX was in the Iraqi warhead remnants, the U.S. laboratory would be the only one claiming proof that Iraq had weaponised the gas which can kill within minutes if inhaled or placed on the skin.

Although Butler would argue that the U.S. findings are valid, Iraq would receive a substantial political boost as UNSCOM of being manipulated by the U.S. and Israeli intelligence services.

Such claims have been given further credence in recent weeks after former

U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter confirmed that he worked with the intelligence communities of both countries in tracking down Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Ritter resigned in August to protest the perceived U.S. and U.N. failure to confront Iraq over its weapons programmes.

A U.N. official hoped that the technical conclusions would be "clear and precise" enough to enable the U.N. Security Council to reach a political determination.

The VX issue is on the council table at a critical time, with the 15 members offering Iraq a "comprehensive review" of Iraqi sanctions if Baghdad rescinds an Aug. 5 decision suspending cooperation with the weapons inspectors.

The U.N. official noted that Iraq was unlikely to resume cooperation before finding out the results of the expert meeting here, attended by representatives of Britain, China, France, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.



A Palestinian woman with a framed picture of a relative, who is held in an Israeli jail, sits at the side of the road near the entrance to the Gush Katif region in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. As a signal to the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Washington, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip held a demonstration in support of the Palestinians held in Israeli prisons (AP photo)

'Misha'al's letter leads to arrest of militants'

HEBRON (AP) — In his letter to Mohammad Natche, a Hamas activist in Hebron, Misha'al outlined the activities of the group's military wing, Izzedine Al Qassam, and referred to Qassam members by their initials, said a Palestinian official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

As a result, 16 members of the Hamas military wing were arrested in the past two weeks. Arrests continued Tuesday when 15 Hamas members were

rounded up because they apparently had ties to Salem Rajab Sarsour, a Hebron man who threw two hand grenades in the Israeli town of Beersheba on Monday, injuring 64 people.

The Misha'al letter was found in Natche's possessions. Natche was arrested by Palestinian police last month after a bomb factory was discovered in his home.

Palestinian security officials also said they have begun following the Hamas money trail. Bank account numbers have been collected and the financial transactions are being watched, said a Palestinian security official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Israel has long demanded that the Palestinians crack down on Hamas by arresting and disarming activists and stopping the flow of money from Hamas leaders abroad to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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Israel has long demanded that the Palestinians crack down on Hamas by arresting and disarming activists and stopping the flow of money from Hamas leaders abroad to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel tried to recruit assailant as double agent, papers report

TEL AVIV (AP) — A Hamas activist who hurled hand grenades at Israeli soldiers earlier this week was asked shortly before the attack to become an informer for Israel's Shin Bet security service, Israeli newspapers reported Wednesday.

The dailies cited unidentified Shin Bet officials who confirmed earlier Palestinian claims that the Hamas activist, 29-year-old Salem Rajab Sarsour, was a double agent. The officials said the recruiting plan did not go beyond the initial stages.

The Palestinians' West Bank security chief, Jibril Rajoub, charged that by approaching

Sarsour, the Shin Bet was indirectly responsible for Monday's hand grenade attack in the southern Israeli town of Beersheba in which 64 Israelis were wounded.

Rajoub suggested that Sarsour carried out the attack because he wanted to clear himself of suspicions that he collaborated with Israel. "There are documents and evidence that his (Sarsour's) response to the attempt to recruit him was to throw grenades and carry out terrorist attacks," Rajoub told Israeli army radio.

The new reports may prove embarrassing to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who said the Beersheba attack

furnished more proof that the Palestinian National Authority is not doing enough to fight Islamists and prevent attacks in Israel.

Israel's security demands are a key issue in the week-long Mideast summit talks at Wye Plantation in Maryland.

Sarsour, a father of five from the West Bank town of Hebron, was arrested on Monday morning at the scene of the grenade attack.

The army said Sarsour also confessed to his interrogators that he killed an elderly rabbi, Shlomo Raanan, in Hebron on Aug. 20 and that he hurled hand grenades at Israeli troops in the city on Sept. 30.

'U.N. making good progress in easing Iran-Taleban tension'

TEHRAN (AFP) — The United Nations is making good progress in easing tension between Iran and the Taleban Islamic militia, the U.N. special envoy for Afghanistan said here Wednesday.

Lakhdar Brahimi told reporters before departing after a one-day visit that the Taleban was "actively searching to find and punish" the militiamen who killed Iranian diplomats in August.

"Good progress is being made in defusing tension between Iran and the Taleban," he said.

The arrest and punishment of the killers of the diplomats has been Iran's main condition before it agrees to talk to the Taleban, which now controls

90 per cent of Afghanistan.

Brahimi, on his second visit here this month, had expressed the hope that his talks in Tehran will help reduce tension between Shiite Muslim Iran and the Sunni Muslim Taleban sparked by the killing of the diplomats in August.

Iran has massed tens of thousands of troops on its border with Afghanistan while the Taleban has deployed 30,000 on the other side of the frontier.

But Brahimi said Iran was "not enthusiastic at the moment to talk to the Taleban," until the militia abides by U.N. resolutions and declarations by the so-called "Six Plus Two" group.

Both the United Nations and the "Six Plus Two" which

groups Russia, the United States and Afghanistan's six neighbours including Iran — have called on the Taleban to negotiate peace with other Afghan factions for a broad-based government.

Taleban leaders have said they are ready to meet Iranian officials in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the permanent seat of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) which is currently chaired by Iran.

Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi, in a meeting earlier with Brahimi, thanked the U.N. envoy for helping to secure the release of Iranian prisoners in Afghanistan.

The Taleban freed 25 Iranians last week after Brahimi visited the central Afghan town of Kandahar.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli army arrests 7 Palestinians

NABLUS (AFP) — Israeli army troops arrested seven Palestinians overnight from the West Bank village of Tell, near Nablus. Palestinian sources here said Tuesday. Among those detained were three students from Al Najah University in Nablus. A total of 25 Palestinians have been arrested in the Nablus area since Sunday, according to Palestinian sources. The Israeli army declined to comment.

Syrian condemned to death in Yemen

ADEN (AFP) — A Syrian with a Spanish passport was condemned to death here Wednesday for plotting with an unnamed foreign country to carry out bomb attacks in Yemen. Nabil Nanaki Kasebati received the death sentence as the ring-leader of a group which carried out several bombings, mostly in the port city of Aden, capital of former South Yemen. The death sentence is normally carried out by firing squad in Yemen. Court officials said 21 others were sentenced to jail terms of between 18 months and four years, while five defendants were acquitted. The case opened in November 1997, and four of those convicted were tried in absentia.

GCC official urges expatriate replacement

KUWAIT (R) — A senior Gulf Arab official has called upon states in the region to move immediately to replace their large foreign workforces with locals. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Jumeil Al Hajjailan urged members to "stop shelving this chronic matter," in an interview with the official Kuwait News Agency on Tuesday night. "Dealing with all these (foreign) communities, particularly if their number increases in the future, will be extremely difficult," he said.

Qatari FM testifies in coup trial

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jasssem Al Thani testified in court on Wednesday in the trial of 121 people accused of involvement in a failed 1996 coup. The official news agency QNA said the court met behind closed doors and that Sheikh Hamad was the sole witness in the day's hearing "because of the volume of evidence." Sheikh Hamad told journalists ahead of the session that his court appearance — a first for a minister in the Gulf Arab monarchies — "proves in word as well as deed" that Qatar was on a democratic path. Qatar has ousted Emir Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani of ordering the coup against his son with foreign help. Several foreigners are among the accused, while 38 suspects are still at large and being tried in absentia for the February 1996 failed coup against the emir. Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani.

Egyptian tomb squatter evacuated

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian prosecutor, in a landmark decision, has ordered a tomb squatter to evacuate his "dwelling" of 35 years and return it to its rightful owners, the government daily Al Akhbar reported Wednesday. Prompted by an acute shortage in housing in the late 1960s, thousands of Egyptian families have been living in cemeteries around Islamic Cairo in rooms adjoining the tombs. To avoid confrontations, the authorities have never attempted to relocate the tomb-squatters and Tuesday's court decision is seen as a landmark verdict, the newspaper said. The prosecutor took action after the owner of a tomb filed a complaint saying he had gone to the cemetery in Bab Al Nasr, in eastern Cairo, to bury his mother but was turned away by squatters who had taken over the tomb. The tomb owner had to bury his mother in another cemetery.

Wye River summit will torpedo peace process — Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The official Syrian press launched a broadside on Wednesday at the peace summit at Wye River in advance of any announcement on an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

The talks "had nothing to do with peace" but would instead "torpedo the peace process," said the official Syrian news agency SANA.

The negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, which enter a seventh day on Wednesday, "are an encouragement to Israeli aggression," the agency said.

Meanwhile, the Al Baath newspaper, the mouthpiece of President Hafez Assad's ruling party, argued "the expected agreement makes no mention of (Jewish) settlement and does not impose conditions on the Israelis."

"The summit was held under the slogan of a 'search for peace' although the Palestinian people are the victims of repression and terror," the newspaper said.

"These negotiations are far removed from the principles of the Madrid conference

(which launched the Arab-Israeli peace process in 1991). (U.N.) Security Council resolutions and the principle of land-for-peace," said the official government daily Tishrin.

"Is the aim to strengthen the (Israeli) occupation under the pretext of guaranteeing the security of (Jewish) settlers or to guarantee the security of the Palestinian people by ending the occupation and dismantling the settlements?" the paper asked.

"It is astonishing that more than 100,000 Arabs in Hebron are under the thumb of 400 Zionist settlers who sow corruption, set fire to shops and destroy houses and whole quarters (of the town)."

"No one is expecting that the Wye Plantation summit will produce anything other than what favours Israel and legitimises the occupation, relegating the Palestinian problem to the basement by reducing the debate to discussions over a few square kilometres where all decisions will depend on the dictate of the rulers in Tel Aviv," another official daily, Al Thawra, said.

Mideast talks help Clinton, whatever the outcome

WASHINGTON (AP) — No matter what the outcome of the Mideast peace summit may be, President Bill Clinton already is benefiting from the talks.

Investing time and prestige, Clinton has polished his credentials as a world statesman willing to tackle the dispute between the Palestinians and Israelis. Newspaper and television pictures show him wrapping his arms around Mideast adversaries in the Rose Garden and intervening in difficult negotiations.

Whatever happens, at least he tried. It's a far cry from headlines screaming about sexual improprieties and impeachment.

"At least he changes the subject and it looks as if he is doing the people's business. That is good for him," said

Michael Mandelbaum, director of American Foreign Policy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

"They will claim a diplomatic triumph no matter what happens," Mandelbaum said. "Of course this is calibrated politically. Of course Bill Clinton wants to get something out of this. The presidency is a political office." When presidents get in trouble at home, and particularly in their second terms, they often turn to foreign affairs to make their mark. As the leader of the world's only superpower, Clinton commands plenty of respect overseas even if his reputation is tarnished at home.

Prime ministers and presidents of other countries look to the United

States for leadership on difficult issues. They are not concerned with Clinton's extramarital relationship. "They want this to be over without the president being damaged," said Thomas Mann, director of Governmental Studies at the Brookings Institution.

Clinton was back at the talks Tuesday, joined by King Hussein in pressing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat toward a settlement. At the start of the day, he had spent 44 hours on Maryland's Eastern Shore at the Wye Conference Centre, an extraordinary amount of presidential time.

With Congress rushing to the campaign trail and with impeachment hearings on hold until after November con-

gressional elections, Clinton has been basking in favourable headlines, winning big concessions from Republicans in the budget fight and threatening America's military might in Kosovo.

His job approval ratings are strong in the mid to high 60s, as they have throughout the Monica Lewinsky controversy.

Still, the experts don't expect the Middle East — or any foreign policy issue — to have much impact on Clinton's poll numbers. And the impeachment inquiry will return with a vengeance after the elections.

Jimmy Carter's Middle East triumph — the Camp David accords — was a genuine breakthrough but didn't help him a lot. He lost his bid for reelection to Ronald Reagan.

Pavarotti out of 'Tosca' opera after surgery

NEW YORK (AP) — Luciano Pavarotti has pulled out of three performances at the Metropolitan Opera as he recovers from major hip and knee surgery. Pavarotti, who had the surgery in July, will miss his scheduled appearances as Cavaradossi in Puccini's "Tosca" on Nov. 7, 12 and 16 while he recovers, Met general manager Joseph Volpe said Tuesday. The tenor still plans to appear in a gala performance on Nov. 22 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his Met debut.

Magicians gather for Balkan trickiest

SOFIA (AFP) — More than 150 magicians from six Balkan countries gather in Sofia this weekend for a two-day festival of illusion and trickery, organisers said Wednesday. Participants from Greece, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Romania, Moldova and Bulgaria will compete for a top prize of \$1,000 at the festival, attended by the secretary general of the world illusionist federation Maurice Pierre. Russian star magician Nechipurenko will also be in town for the event, the first such Balkan festival, being held in the army's social club headquarters in the Bulgarian capital.

160 million Chinese will be aged over 80 in 2050

BEIJING (AFP) — After threatening Western nations the problem of an ageing population is now affecting China, which will have up to 160 million people aged over 80 in 2050, the official Xinhua news agency said Wednesday. The number of people aged over 80 will pass 25 million in 2010 to reach 160 million — equivalent to the population of Brazil — in the middle of the next century, Xinhua said citing experts. Experts say genetic factors alone are responsible for a quarter of longevity cases while the rest result from other factors. The population is expected to peak at 1.6 billion in 2030 before starting to fall.

Snake accompanies passengers on flight

DUESSELDORF (AP) — A New York-Duesseldorf flight arrived Tuesday with one more passenger than had checked in: a 30-centimetre snake. A young woman spotted the snake slithering between her feet just before take off. Still, the flight went on as scheduled. Another passenger took control of the situation, rapping the creature in two plastic bags and setting it in a bathroom for the duration of the trip. Duesseldorf airport officials said.

"I thought it was my cat playing on my bed"

BRISBANE (AP) — A woman awoke in bed Tuesday to find a two-metre-long carpet snake wrapped around her arm and its teeth embedded in her leg. Katherine Bell, 34, said she was sleeping alongside her six-year-old daughter Carla when she felt a pain in her leg at about 4 a.m. "I thought it was my cat playing on my bed," said Bell, of Brisbane. "I went to move my arm to turn on the bedside light but it [the snake] was wrapped around my arm and its mouth was biting my knee." Bell staggered out of bed, flailing wildly to free herself from the snake.

Caroline of Monaco opens scanning unit

LONDON (AFP) — Princess Caroline of Monaco opened Tuesday a new scanning unit at the private London hospital named after her mother Princess Grace, who died in a car accident in 1982. Caroline, wearing a grey suit, visited the new unit, which can take three-dimensional images of organs and blood vessels, and talked to staff.

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